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THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN THE LOCAL CHURCH  
AS IT ENCOUNTERS RACISM

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
John Davis  
June 1971

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*This dissertation, written by*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development of this dissertation would not have occurred had it not been for the support of several parties. The open receptivity of the personnel involved in Project Understanding meant that the required data could be gathered and interpreted. The typing and proof reading skills of Mrs. Barbara Henckel helped to insure that the final draft approached some degree of scholarly appearance.

Dean F. Thomas Trotter not only assisted in clarifying my thinking but also provided the continuous encouragement so necessary for completion. A special word of gratitude is extended to my friend and the chairman of the dissertation committee, Dr. Dan D. Rhoades. His instruction, supervision, and example have challenged and strengthened me in my own struggle to become a change agent in the midst of conflict.

Sufficient time was made available for the year's study through the granting of a sabbatical leave from the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The scholarship aid from this body, the Burns Memorial United Methodist Church, Aurora, Colorado, and the Parish Ministers Fellowship Program relieved some of the financial anxieties.

Above all, I give thanks to my wife, Virginia, whose love and faith made this venture possible. She joyfully took up a heavy work schedule by reassuming her professional career and by her parenting our sons during my frequent absence. It is to her and our four sons, John Gregory, Richard Todd, Michael Robert, and MarcLowell, that this dissertation is dedicated.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Issue

When one contemplates the contemporary scene, he may be baffled or even relieved by the calmness that hovers over the country. A new mood prevails in contrast to the dissension over the war in Southeast Asia and the disruptive rhetoric and action taken by members of racial minorities and by representatives of government in retaliation. Kingman Brewster, president of Yale University, has recently depicted the prevailing climate as an "eerie tranquility."<sup>1</sup> A popular periodical describes this marked shift from persistent confrontation to privatism as "the cooling of America."<sup>2</sup>

This lull in the intensity and pace of societal strife not only evokes a welcomed reprieve from heated controversy but also permits time for inquiry into the nature of social conflict. The incidences denoted above lead many to disapprove of social conflict. In some quarters the absence of conflict is thought to signify the existence of social harmony and stability. Aggression, hostility, antagonism, and animosity are frequently regarded as social heresies and therefore to be avoided. For these persons conflict is a form of

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<sup>1</sup>"Mr. President: How Has Yale Avoided Sex Problems, Or Has It?" *Yale Alumni Magazine*, XXXIV:2 (November 1970), 32.

<sup>2</sup>"The Cooling of America," *Time*, 97:8 (February 22, 1971), 10-19.

evil.

Most philosophers and theologians assume this position. Whether one begins as a Platonist from a concept of static being or as a theologian from a myth of paradise, the implications are the same. Conflict is discord and discord, the opposite of harmony, is evil. Reinhold Niebuhr who deals seriously with the reality of man's sin within himself and with his fellowman in society perceives conflict accordingly. "Man knows both by experience and by the demand for coherence in his rational nature that life ought not be lived at cross-purposes, that conflict within the self and between the self and others is an evil."<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich regards conflict as a symptom of the ambiguity of life.

One could write a 'phenomenology of encounters' showing how the growth of life at every step includes conflicts with other life. . . . In a push and counterpush, life effects a preliminary balance in all dimensions, but there is no a priori certainty about the outcome of these conflicts. The balance achieved in one moment is destroyed in the next.<sup>4</sup>

Sociologists have tended to concur with the negative view of conflict taken by philosophers and theologians. While it is true that early sociologists such as Georg Simmel and Charles H. Cooley did construct their social theories around conflict, most of the current social theorists have either eliminated or reduced the role of conflict. Conflict is more often treated as strain, tension, or stress of social

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<sup>3</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), pp. 81-82.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), III, 53.



structures. Talcott Parsons, the Harvard professor and exponent of the functional-structural school, has compared conflict to a disease.<sup>5</sup> Adherents of Parsons' position have focused upon questions that deal with the maintenance of society, with the cement that holds diverse institutions together and makes them compatible with one another.

Among the many institutions in our society that has long maintained a high regard for order, equilibrium and continuity is the church. These prized attributes are, however, now being seriously questioned by churchmen beset by conflict.<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey K. Hadden, whose recent studies of churchmen's theological and social attitudes is recognized as the most scientific research available, believes "that the churches are involved in a deep and entangling crisis which in the years ahead may seriously disrupt or alter the very nature of the church."<sup>7</sup> New roles adapted by the clergy in society such as critic,

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<sup>5</sup>This description of Parsons' attitude toward conflict is one that is depicted by Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1956), p. 21. A more modest judgment of Coser's position on conflict is that it is quickly dismissed or else is introduced into his theory for purposes of correction and adjustment. See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: Free Press, 1951), pp. 4-5, 513, & 543.

<sup>6</sup>A partial listing of theologians and sociologists who have contributed pertinent research and analysis in regard to conflict situations in the church include the following: Peter Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961); James E. Dittes, *The Church in the Way* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967); Charles Y. Glock, Benjamin B. Ringer, and Earl R. Babbie, *To Comfort and to Challenge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Jeffrey K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969); Robert Lee and Russell Galloway, *The Schizophrenic Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

<sup>7</sup>Hadden, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

advocate, broker, facilitator, liberator and reconciler stand in pointed contrast to the more traditional roles of educator, apologist, trainer, and counselor. In turn, laymen are more sophisticated in their understanding of ecclesiastical matters and exert greater tenacity in resisting clerical involvement in societal problems.<sup>8</sup>

The racial issue that cuts across clergy-laity, denominational, and congregational lines continues to be one of the major areas of conflict in the church. Division occurs among churchmen with differing sensitivities to attitudinal and institutional racism. How long shall black and brown victims of racism and their white advocates tolerate the insensitivity and blundering of their prejudiced brothers? On the other hand, what types of confrontation shall be tolerated within white congregations? How can one and the same community embody the priestly mission of reconciliation among men and the prophetic mission of rebuking the evil which resides within its members as well as in the citizens of the nation? Genuine theological controversy can and does break out between those who emphasize that the church is a fellowship of reconciliation and those who affirm that she is an eschatological community awaiting the Kingdom of God, between those who view the church as social change cadre and those who perceive it as legitimation of the status quo. The result is a de facto conflict in sacramental fellowship and church order.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>9</sup>One vivid episode which aptly illustrates the divisions created by racism in the church is the "Black Manifesto." For a critical

No one involved in congregational conflict, whether it centers on individual and systemic racism or a less disruptive issue, can deny that conflict produces negative consequences. However, the constructive possibilities of conflict are often passed over by churchmen. The church stands in need of studies that illuminate when conflict becomes an integral, indispensable force in the church's life and when it becomes a divisive, expendable factor.

Arthur Foster identifies three tasks necessary if the church is to institutionalize conflict: 1) a marked attitudinal change, 2) competence and sophistication in learning the basic theory of conflict and the basic skills of conflict management, and 3) reshaping of theology from the standpoint of conflict as a hermeneutical tool.<sup>10</sup> The research and analysis offered in this dissertation primarily are directed toward Foster's second task, the study of social conflict and the development of expertise in conflict management-resolution. Nevertheless, an effort will also be made to examine the theological implications of the images of man assumed by three theorists of social conflict. The purpose of this research succinctly stated is: to delineate a hermeneutical framework for dealing with conflict in

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analysis of the events which led to its delivery and the responses following its presentation see *Black Manifesto* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1969); and Arnold Schuchter, *Reparations* (New York: Lippincott, 1970). Another publication that documents racial division in the church in relation to black militancy is Joseph C. Hough, Jr., *Black Power and White Protestants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> Arthur L. Foster, "Conflict and Consensus Within the Congregation," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, LX:6 (September 1970), 25.

congregational life.

### Proposed Methodology

To achieve this stated purpose is no simple chore, since neither social scientists nor churchmen know very much about conflict despite its ubiquity. Man possesses no "phenomenology of encounters," as Tillich said he ought to have. There exist no fully developed instruments to measure the quantity and the quality of conflict. However, one is not entirely devoid of resources. With the advent of the technological revolution and its contribution to accelerated social change, a number of social theorists are beginning to examine conflict. Thus far, most of their efforts have been concentrated upon political, economic, and psychological systems and consequently require thoughtful consideration if they are to be utilized in ecclesiastical settings.<sup>11</sup> Among the many theorists whose works offer promise of serving as conceptual tools for reflection on conflict in the church, are those constructed by Warren G. Bennis, Lewis A. Coser, and Ralf Dahrendorf.

Just as important as the instruments for examination and evaluation of data is the accessibility to relevant material. Such access was made available to me by the acting director of Project Understanding, Dr. Dan D. Rhoades. Through his gracious invitation I became an

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<sup>11</sup>I especially have in mind the studies represented in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* published by the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan. Frequent contributors are Kenneth E. Boulding, Richard Snyder, and Morton Deutsch.

observer-researcher to this internship program designed for seminary students to counter white racism in predominately suburban churches. The declared purposes of the project at its inception in 1969 were the following ones:

- 1) To facilitate change in the attitudes of members within local churches.
- 2) To facilitate change in the institutional practices and policies of local white Protestant churches.
- 3) To throw some light on methods of training for social change that might be broadly applicable to laity and clergy in the local churches as well as to seminary education for the ministry.
- 4) To experiment cooperatively with the seminary, local churches and special church organizations in efforts at developing models for countering white racism.<sup>12</sup>

Three important assumptions underlie these stated purposes.

First, the causes of racism are directly attributed to the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans.<sup>13</sup> The target for change in the project is thus concentrated upon the white suburban church which in turn is intertwined into the systemic and cultural network of racism.<sup>14</sup> Second, the suburban church can be the

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<sup>12</sup>"Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I" (Claremont: School of Theology), pp. 2-3. One significant change in the stated purposes for the second year occurs in the fourth one. Instead of expecting the seminary interns to develop new models, the emphasis has shifted to testing presently available models for attitudinal and institutional change. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup>This assumption takes seriously the major thesis of the "Kerner Report." "White racism is essentially responsible for the explosive mixture which has been accumulating in our cities since the end of World War II." National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. *Report* (New York: New York Times, 1968), p. 10.

<sup>14</sup>Two recent publications that address the institutional and cultural dimensions of white racism are Robert W. Terry, *For Whites Only* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), and *Institutional Racism in*

locale where the attitudes and behavior of its members is altered and where institutional life is organized and managed according to a conscious statement of purpose. Or, in theological terms the church, "the body of Christ," can effect fundamental life styles and has the means to alter its own internal structures. Third, at the same time that the focus of the project is directed to combatting attitudinal and institutional racism in the local church, it is also assumed that valuable learning can take place in regard to the training of ministerial leadership. The latter is accomplished by the placing of seminary interns into a particular locale with the expectations of forming a collegial relation with the resident pastor(s) whose congregations are designated as the centers of change. The interns offer skills gained from an intensive twelve-week training course under the direction of the Center for Metropolitan Mission In-Service Training (COMMIT) in Los Angeles, as well as necessary time and motivation. The parish minister provides information, interpretation, guidance, and support.<sup>15</sup>

My assignment as *observer* insured access to data that could not have been garnered from readings, written inquiry, or even formal interviews. Open reception by seminary interns, supervisors, consultants, and laymen at each of the five locations in Temple City,

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*America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> These three assumptions were articulated by the acting director of Project Understanding, Dr. Dan D. Rhoades, in a public forum at the School of Theology at Claremont, February 25, 1971.

Pasadena, San Diego, North Hollywood, and Reseda meant that I could observe the processes of theologizing, team building, goal setting, decision making, conflict resolution, and evaluation. Likewise, the weight of the consequence of actions taken and the frailty of efforts manifested in the face of restrictive forces could be closely followed. As the observation took place every effort was made to be as objective as possible while theological and sociological presuppositions were being formulated and while decisions for specific strategies were being developed. A description of the five settings in which the observation occurred appears in Appendix A.

The second role as *researcher* in the project entailed the preparation of an interview questionnaire. The initial draft was prepared by this student and then was submitted to the following persons for their critical comments: Dr. Robert Arnott, professor of Parish Ministry at the School of Theology at Claremont, Mr. Speed Leas, director of COMMIT, Mr. Paul Kittlaus, director of Theological Training at COMMIT, and Dr. Dan D. Rhoades, associate professor of Christian Ethics at the School of Theology at Claremont. Further refinement occurred when the instrument was pretested with a seminary intern, a pastor, and a layman. Each of the three represented a different geographical locale in the project. A copy of the final draft of the questionnaire employed in the interviews is found in Appendix C, while a copy of the letter of introduction from the acting project director to interviewees appears as Appendix B.

Consultative sessions with Dr. Rhoades, who also doubled as

chairman of my dissertation committee, proved to be invaluable occasions for learning. Questions concerning the theology, the history, the objectives, and the models of the project were thoroughly raised and answered. Also, under his supervision bibliographical materials were recommended, and the boundaries of the dissertation were set.

Bibliographical research served as another means of clarifying my observations and research in Project Understanding. Materials selected from the libraries at the School of Theology at Claremont and the Honnold Library of the Claremont Colleges were organized into what now constitutes the bibliography of this dissertation. Detailed notes were taken from the various publications and were incorporated into the second and third chapters. Some of the more technical terms that appear in the dissertation as a result of this research and of my observation-research in Project Understanding II have been placed in an informal glossary under Appendix D.

#### Preview of Organizational Structure

Three positions that represent different points along the spectrum of social conflict will be delineated and critically compared with one another in the *second* chapter. The first, as represented by Warren G. Bennis, sees conflict as constructive only if it can be converted into maintaining or strengthening the prevailing institution. Otherwise, it is dysfunctional. The second, exemplified by Lewis A. Coser, views conflict as an integrative force within social structures. The third, as depicted by Ralf Dahrendorf, perceives conflict, whether



it be positive or negative, as the organizing energy for all social stability and change.

In the *third* chapter the implications for theological anthropology drawn from the three theories of conflict will be treated. Such an analysis is predicated upon two fundamental theses. First, many of the disagreements about social theory hinge on differences over who man is and who he ought to be. Second, the understanding of man gained through the social sciences has a positive contribution to make in informing and correcting earlier Christian interpretations of man.

In the *fourth* chapter, a somewhat longer one, an endeavor is made to describe the different types of conflict that emerge out of the data of Project Understanding. Effort will be made to learn when conflict upbuilds the church and when it tears it down, when it is an instrument for institutional change and when it blocks such change, and when it centers upon issues and when on personalities.

The *fifth*, and concluding chapter, will correlate the findings of the empirical data described in the fourth chapter with the sociological and anthropomorphic formulations of the earlier two chapters. Tentative hypotheses regarding the nature of the church in conflict management will be offered as preliminary considerations for further research and testing.

## CHAPTER II

### SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF CONFLICT

As was indicated in the introductory chapter the first task is to examine basic theories of social conflict. Three social theorists who represent significant, yet diverse, positions in this field are Warren G. Bennis, Lewis A. Coser, and Ralf Dahrendorf. Bennis, who is thoroughly versed in the systems developed by Talcott Parsons and Kurt Lewin, sees conflict as a disruption of organized processes. Coser, an American sociologist, perceives conflict to be a constructive force within social systems. Ralf Dahrendorf, a German sociologist who is strongly influenced by Marxian formulations, views conflict as a creative disequilibrium which has its source in authority relationships.

#### Bennis' Orientation-Organization Development

Of the three theorists selected, only Bennis emphasizes the applied character of his formulations.<sup>1</sup> What has emerged from this pragmatic orientation is commonly characterized as "organization

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<sup>1</sup>Bennis criticizes both Coser and Dahrendorf precisely at this point. "What I particularly object to--and I include the 'newer' theories of neo-conflict (Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* [Glencoe: Free Press, 1956], Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflicts in Industrial Society* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959]) . . . is that they tend to explain the dynamic interactions of a system without providing one clue to the identification of strategic leverages for alteration. They are suitable for observers of social action, not for practioners. They are theorists of change and not of changing." Warren G. Bennis, "Theory and Method in Applying Behavioral Science to Planned Organizational Change," in *The Planning of Change* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), p. 64.

development."<sup>2</sup> Cooperating with Bennis in its design and implementation have been several of his colleagues long identified with the phenomenon of planned change, Edgar Schein, Richard Beckhard, Kenneth Benne, Robert P. Blake, Richard E. Walton.<sup>3</sup> Bennis defines organization development as "a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values and structure of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself."<sup>4</sup>

The general framework of this still developing innovation can be broken down into the following six components:

- 1) Emphasis is placed on the organic variable (attitudes, values, and relations) rather than on the mechanical variable (goods, structures, and technologies of the organization).
- 2) Changes in the organization are directly correlated with matters of its exigency.
- 3) Strategies for change rely heavily upon experienced behavior such as data feedback, sensitivity training, and confrontational exchanges.

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<sup>2</sup>One of the models incorporated into the training of seminary interns in Project Understanding by the COMMIT staff is organization development. Used as process for effecting institutional change, "its forte is in providing the skills to enable the organizational leadership to define their own goals and to develop an effective strategy for achieving them. Operational efficiency and effectiveness, skill in diagnosing and resolving organizational problems, the development of sensitivity to human needs in an organizational environment, and skills in group processes are the types of pay-offs it promises." "Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I" (Claremont: School of Theology), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>See the six volume series *Organization Development*, ed. Edgar Schein, Warren Bennis and Richard Beckhard (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>Warren G. Bennis, *Organization Development* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 2.

- 4) Change agents are ordinarily recruited from outside the client system.
- 5) Collaboration between change agents and constituents of a client system is highly valued.
- 6) Change agents are committed to a social philosophy that honors democratic processes, yet is one that insists on internal efficiency.<sup>5</sup>

The key actor in organization development is clearly the change agent or consultant whose services have been contracted at the initiative of the organization's representatives. He may employ three separate strategies in the consultative process, although the prudent change agent utilizes all three to some degree. The three tactics defined by Bennis are: 1) *Training*, in which participants of groups develop self-insight by examining the dynamics of the group's behavior; 2) *Consultation proper*, in which the change agent articulates the client's problem in such a way that the underlying mechanisms are understood, and action is taken; 3) *Applied Research*, in which feedback is stressed, so that the results of the research serve to motivate involvement in the planning, collection and interpretation of additional data. The usage of each of these three strategies or any combination of the three depends upon the client's understanding of himself, his problem and the dynamics of change.<sup>6</sup>

#### Role of Collaboration

For Bennis, the manner in which change takes place is even more

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 10-15.

<sup>6</sup>Warren G. Bennis, "Theory and Method in Applying Behavioral Science to Planned Organizational Change," *Journal of Applied Science*, I:4 (October, November, December 1965), 340.

important than who initiates a program of change. A collaborative relationship between client and the change agent or among clients and the change agent best exemplifies the desired change process.<sup>7</sup> Collaboration is the crux of a trusting collegiality that in turn insures exchange of pertinent data required for a reliable diagnosis of the system. Collaboration based on mutual trust also enables the client to overcome fears and/or resistances to change. Finally, it is necessary if the clients are to invest commitment in the change undertaken. Otherwise, they will act out of blind obedience or grudging acceptance, neither of which is conducive to enduring change.<sup>8</sup>

Communication is the primary means whereby the trusting relationship is built. Through open and honest confrontation clients attempt to understand the position of each party. It is believed that such procedure not only increases the trust level among the persons involved, but also it enables them to become a "group," assists them to arrive at common conclusions or at least acceptable compromises, and prompts them to move into joint action.

Communication also becomes an essential ingredient when opponents engage one another in the collaborative process. Through

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<sup>7</sup>The collaborative model where both the change agent and his clientele actively engage in examining the issue in question and exchange information and ideas is contrasted with the buyer-seller model where the change agent occupies the role of expert information giver or solution maker for a more or less passive client system.

<sup>8</sup>Bennis, "Theory and Method," in *The Planning of Change*, pp. 147-148.

communication as much clarification as possible is sought. Areas of agreement or matters upon which both parties concur are stressed. From these commonly held principles mutual goals are established. Sometimes the goal setting procedure within an atmosphere of open communication may lead to reshaping of goals, redefining of goals, or compromising of goals in order to enlarge the goals so that all parties may share in them.

### Framework of Conflict

Goal setting between opposing parties is one of three situations wherein conflict arises in organization development. A second occasion for conflict is reflected in the struggle which ensues over the allocation of commonly honored, but scarce goods, i.e. money, power, prestige, and status. The third type manifests itself in psychological perceptions which the conflicting parties hold about themselves and their "opponents." Hostility, resentment, displacement, and prejudice are frequently revealed under the stress and strain of internal strife.<sup>9</sup>

Nowhere does Bennis clearly pinpoint the source of conflict. In one instance he infers that conflict is invariably present whenever interface occurs between the organization and a human being.<sup>10</sup> In another article in the same publication he suggests that conflict

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Warren G. Bennis and Philip E. Slater, *The Temporary Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 4.

grows out of the mounting bureaucracy. "As organizations become more complex, they fragment and divide, building tribal patterns and symbolic codes, which often work to exclude others (secrets and jargon, for example) and on occasions to exploit differences for inward (and always fragile) harmony."<sup>11</sup> Immediately following this quotation he offers still another alternative. Conflict is induced from outside the organizational system by entering parties.<sup>12</sup> Among other things this ambiguity over the origin of conflict signifies Bennis' commitment to the practical dimensions of organizational development. For him conflict does not play such a theoretical role as it does a descriptive one. As the latter it accounts for the dynamic property of organizations.<sup>13</sup>

This judgment that conflict is an integral part of organizational life is further supported by the confidence which Bennis has in the competence of change agents to lead their clientele through problem solving steps to resolve conflict. This procedure first acknowledges that conflict must be recognized and confronted as reality. It is not to be denied, suppressed, or compromised. Once faced, then the various factors of its existence must be understood. The motivational complexity of oneself, one's group, and of the other party or parties

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Congruent with this view is the recognition that Bennis' formulation accents the technology of dealing with conflict rather than conceptualizes the basic theses about the nature of conflict.

is noted. No one person or party is viewed as absolutely good or bad. The capacities and limitations of each is acknowledged. Attempts are made to distinguish between the real source of the problem and distortions of the problem. Ventilation of hostilities is encouraged so that it can prompt open examination and if need be, correction. Through all of these steps high value is placed upon keeping conflict within some kind of order so that it can be institutionalized or incorporated into the existing structure.<sup>14</sup>

The pivotal authority for Bennis in this problem solving process is reason. Conflict cannot be resolved or managed without rationality undergirding every step. The methods of the collaborative approach must be learned and they ordinarily demand mastery of complex skills and processes not required by coercive strategies. Consequently, the third type of conflict previously depicted as psychologically oriented or emotionally disruptive lie beyond the efforts of persons committed to the problem solving process. Since it is pathological in nature, it is assigned to sociotherapeutic and psychotherapeutic communities.<sup>15</sup>

Bennis takes care not to interpret conflict resolution as the total elimination of conflict. To do so would mean the disappearance of lively differences held by respective persons and/or parties within

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<sup>14</sup>Edgar H. Schein and Warren G. Bennis, *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1965), p. 34.

<sup>15</sup>Bennis, "Theory and Method," in *The Planning of Change*, p. 152.



conflict situations as well as to block the possibilities of converting energy produced in such situations into constructive or creative behavior.

The goal of conflict management is . . . better conceived as the acceptance and enhancement of differences among persons and groups, accompanied by enlarged respect for and appreciation of the value of difference within the social fabric and augmented commitment to and skill in consensual ways of using continuing conflicts to serve purposes of personal growth and social progress.<sup>16</sup>

### Weaknesses in Organization Development

By his own admission Bennis recognizes that the collaborative approach in organization development becomes inoperative under conditions of distrust, violence, and intense conflict.<sup>17</sup> It cannot be effective in situations where persons or parties share radically opposing values, interests, and goals, or where goals cannot be distributed in such a way that both sides can get what they need or want or where there does not exist a relative balance of power so that equals are dealing with equals. For Bennis neither conflicting party can be in position to use sanctions upon the other which force compromises or submissions that are not in the interest of the other party.

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 152-153. Bennis' comments about conflict management-resolution must be placed within the framework of collaboration. Conflict is never seen as an ideology or as theory by which to question the existence of organization development.

<sup>17</sup>Bennis, *Organization Development*, pp. 77-78. Bennis' recognition of the limitations of the collaborative approach under certain conditions parallels his reluctance to introduce laboratory training under situations of intense conflict. Schein, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

Bennis also concedes that organization development has not met with success in diffuse power structures such as exist in urban areas or in conglomerate firms.<sup>18</sup> Its main arena of competence exists among closed, hierarchical structures in which power and authority are relatively centralized. In such tightly organized institutions the consultant looks for vehicles of social change in the existing system. For him the organizational structure is fully capable of adjusting to or setting up additional arrangements to deal with problems and needs. It is only in this sense that he can argue that the prevailing system is open.<sup>19</sup>

Some fifteen years before Bennis' acknowledgement of this second deficiency Lewis A. Coser caustically cited the coalition between private bureaucracies and planned change exponents and questioned whether the latter had not sacrificed their freedom to be responsible social scientists. He contended that social scientists who affiliate themselves so closely with powerful institutions must necessarily concentrate on the problems delineated by corporation executives who are financing the consultation.<sup>20</sup> Even more detrimental was his

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<sup>18</sup>Bennis, *Organization Development*, p. 78. As one means to correct this deficiency new job descriptions are being prepared for the consultant's portfolio. While the inclusion of measures to cope with power factors does not guarantee that the advocates of planned change will be more competent, it does nevertheless reflect a growing awareness in their ranks of the need to deal seriously with disruptive forces emulating from society.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>Coser, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

discovery that the resolution of selected problems often supported the "preservation of existing institutional arrangements."<sup>21</sup>

#### Coser's Orientation: Constructive Functions of Conflict

Whether or not these charges can be substantiated does not lie in the perspectus of this dissertation. Their inclusion does serve, however, to introduce the second social theorist under consideration, Lewis A. Coser. His persistent commitment to the constructive forces of social conflict is unquestioned by adversary and advocate alike. While he does agree that certain types of conflict may lead to destructive results, he seeks to correct what he believes to be an overemphasis on these negative aspects. Making his case in the first of two well known publications dedicated to conflict theory, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, he reformulates sixteen propositions drawn from the classic writings of Georg Simmel.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.* For Coser such capitulation comes as no surprise from any student of Talcott Parsons and Kurt Lewin. Coser reads Parsons to have viewed conflict as "having primarily disruptive, dissociating, and dysfunctional consequences." *Ibid.*, p. 21. Likewise, Lewin's earlier emphasis on the positive forces of conflict has been disregarded by the designers of organization development who now push Lewin's later stress on conflict as a "dysfunctional social phenomenon." *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup>See Georg Simmel, *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliations* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1955). Behind Simmel looms Karl Marx who perceives conflict as a precondition for the orderly functioning of society. "Marx illuminates a most important aspect of group formation: group belongingness is established by an objective conflict situation--in this case a conflict of interests; but only by experiencing this antagonism, that is, by becoming aware of it and by acting it out, does the group (or class) establish its identity." Lewis A. Coser, *Continuities in the Study of Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 33-34.

### Major Types of Intragroup Conflict

In the process of reconstructing these propositions Coser narrows the broad terrain which Simmel has set for conflict. While his German mentor has interpreted conflict as a form of socialization, Coser limits his working definition to "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of opponents are to neutralize, injure, and eliminate their rivals."<sup>23</sup> Like Bennis he recognizes that overt strife over coveted prizes is often accompanied by psychological elements. To distinguish between the two he creates the categories of *realistic* and *non-realistic* conflict.

Conflicts which arise from frustration of specific demands within the relationship and from estimates of gains of the participants and which are directed at the presumed frustrating objective can be called realistic conflicts, insofar as they are means toward a specific result. Non-realistic conflicts, on the other hand, although still involving interaction between two or more persons are not occasioned by the rival ends of the antagonists, but by the need for tension release of at least one of them.<sup>24</sup>

By employing these antithetical categories he accents the time factor and the means-ends issue. Realistic conflict emphasizes the "here and now" aspect of objective issues while non-realistic conflict centers upon the accumulated frustrations of the past as they surface in the heat of controversy. Realistic conflict is directed toward a

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<sup>23</sup>Coser, *The Functions*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49. See also page 156.

rational solution of conflict, and therefore, a particular strategy can be altered or scrapped if another approach seems to be more effective. On the other hand, non-realistic conflict does not possess this flexibility as it derives its satisfaction from the aggressive act itself. Adherents of the latter position have as their sole concern the release of aggressive impulses rather than the consideration of specific objectives.<sup>25</sup>

This distinction between realistic and non-realistic conflict carries serious implications for the change agent. Although frustration, aggression, hostility, or any other form of psychological motivation does not serve as the objective reference for conflict, their presence does call for skillful management. Until non-realistic elements of the conflict situation are handled with care and competence, the quarreling parties will not be free to consider functional alternatives for working through realistic conflict.<sup>26</sup> The change agent also will need to be conscious of the degree of rigidity operating in the social system or the institutional structure where the conflict occurs. Plasticity in either one supports non-realistic conflict and thereby delays concentration upon realistic conflict.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 48-55. In another source Coser makes the same distinction between realistic and non-realistic conflict by those conflicts that depart from the norms of society in terms of deviance and those whose departure involves a complete "transvaluation of values" or the formation of distinctive patterns and new value systems. Coser, *Continuities*, pp. 31-35.

<sup>26</sup>Coser, *The Functions*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

The contrast between realistic and non-realistic conflict is only the first of three sets of antitheses that I want to incorporate under a proposed typology of Coser's propositions for intergroup conflict. *Communal-non-communal* is the second pair.<sup>28</sup> Communal conflict takes place when there is a struggle over values and norms within a consensus context or when there is a sense of belonging to an encompassing unit more fundamental than the points of conflict. Within a community where there exists a consensus regarding ultimate purposes or significant goals, conflict is seen as leading to new forms of integration and to new means by which accepted objectives can be achieved.

Internal social conflicts which concern goals, values, or interests that do not contradict the basic assumptions upon which the relationship is founded tend to be positively functional for social structure. Such conflicts tend to make possible the readjustment of norms and power relations within groups in accordance with the felt needs of its individual members or subgroups.<sup>29</sup>

In comparison non-communal conflict occurs whenever communal consensus has dissolved or has never existed regarding "basic values upon which the legitimacy of the social system rests."<sup>30</sup>

Kenneth E. Boulding points out the risk that is inherent when a group deals with communal conflict. He argues if conflict is to

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<sup>28</sup>The contrast between communal and non-communal conflict was first identified by George Simpson. See George Simpson, *Conflict and Community* (New York: Simpson, 1937), pp. 41ff.

<sup>29</sup>Coser, *The Functions*, p. 151.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

remain communal and to lead to reconciliation, it must concern itself with issues that do not challenge the ultimate values or ideals of the community or social system.

The success of the reconciliation process clearly depends on how far the value structures of the parties in the field of conflict occupy the core of the shell of the value image. If the conflict is about a core value, reconciliation will be difficult or even impossible, short of very drastic experiences and conversions. If the conflict is about a shell value, change is possible, and so reconciliation is possible, though not all processes of communication lead to reconciliation.<sup>31</sup>

While conflict that jeopardizes the very existence of the community can hardly be said to communalize, the problem is complicated because the line between the core and shell is not always clear. Sometimes what one party may consider core another may consider shell. The line is drawn on the basis of value orientations or basic assumptions that may vary from person to person or from subgroup to subgroup.<sup>32</sup>

A third set of antitheses which Coser offers for understanding intragroup conflict occurs in his distinction between *closely-knit* groups and *segmental* groups. In the former groups there has developed a peculiar reluctance to act out authentic feelings such as hostility

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<sup>31</sup>Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 312.

<sup>32</sup>Not only do value orientations or basic assumptions fluctuate but also the conditions that lead to oneness between groups vary. A highly valued condition for certain moralists is a context calling for shared power relations that emerge out of a sense of justice and realism. For a perspective that makes justice a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for reconciliation see Tex S. Sample's "Consensus and Conflict Strategies: Their Implications for the League of Women Voters in Working with Powerless Groups in American Society."

despite a high frequency of interaction and personality involvement over an extended period of time. These same feelings remain suppressed until they explode with such pressure as to threaten the very existence of the group.<sup>33</sup>

In segmental groups members invest only a part of their energies. Other groupings also have claim upon their time, gifts, and talents. Consequently conflict is less threatening to members of segmental bodies. They are free to engage in a multiplicity of conflicting situations since they have a variety of associations upon which to derive meaning. "This (multiplicity) in itself tends to constitute a check against the breakdown of consensus: the energies of group members are mobilized in many directions and will not concentrate on one conflict cutting through the group."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, hostility is not allowed to accumulate as it does in closely-knit groups where extreme care is taken to suppress feelings of frustration and anger. Segmental group members are set free to focus on the conditions of the conflict and their eventual demise.<sup>35</sup>

#### Constructive Contributions of Intergroup Conflict

Whereas students of social change frequently quote Coser's propositions regarding intragroup conflict, they sometimes overlook his theses about intergroup or external conflict. The latter appears

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<sup>33</sup>Coser, *The Functions*, pp. 79, 152-153.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*



in skeleton form in the concluding chapter of his previously noted classic, *The Functions of Social Conflict*. Here he offers certain hypotheses for ways in which conflict between outside antagonists affect one or both of them. These may be condensed as follows: 1) The institution or system is stabilized; 2) Group norms are revitalized or renewed; 3) New norms, standards, rules, and values are created; 4) The balance of power within a group is continually readjusted by external confrontation as well as by internal strife; 5) Polarization along one major line of cleavage is prevented by handling frequent and multiple conflicts; and 6) Social isolation is avoided by a multiplicity of associations and coalitions whose diverse purposes crisscross each other.<sup>36</sup>

#### Criticism of Coser's Theses

If one is to take seriously Coser's propositions on the constructive functions of internal and external group conflict, then he will necessarily be concerned if these stated hypotheses and sets of antitheses have been verified by more than historical recall. Raymond Mack poses precisely the same concern when he indicts Coser for his failure to produce empirical verification to support his theories of conflict. "Coser's *The Functions of Social Conflict* runs the risk of being accorded that peculiar form of academic obeisance in which a work is cited by everyone and heeded by no one."<sup>37</sup> In responding to

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<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 153-155.

<sup>37</sup>Raymond W. Mack, "The Components of Social Conflict," *Social*

Mack's critique Coser can only point out one significant study, James Coleman's *Community Conflict*, which tests his propositions against empirical data.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps, an even more crucial question centers upon Coser's obsession with the functional or constructive elements of conflict. The fact that Kenneth Boulding has taken issue with Coser's failure to take due account of the dysfunctions of conflict is well known.<sup>39</sup> What Boulding does not mention in his criticism is that Coser's omission of the negative forces of conflict is accountable to his basic commitment to the structural-functional school of social theory. Even though Coser rejects the Parsonian aversion to conflict, he nevertheless accords to conflict an indispensable role in the movement of social structures toward a healthy tension. Such tension helps to create a balance of power and an enduring equilibrium among opposing parties.

Nowhere is this more apparent in Coser's thinking than it is in his treatment of conflict management. Though he speaks of the termination of conflict, what he has really in mind is the regulation or management of conflict whereby conflict is confined within certain boundaries. "Social structures always contain or create mechanisms

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*Problems*, XXII:4 (Spring 1965), 389.

<sup>38</sup>Coser, *Continuities*, pp. 7-8. Coleman's monograph is judged by Robert Lee and Russell Galloway to be more helpful than Coser's works for social agents working in conflict situations. See Robert Lee and Russell Galloway, *The Schizophrenic Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 175-182.

<sup>39</sup>Boulding, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

that help control and channel conflicts through normative regulation."<sup>40</sup> The single exception to the natural or developed mechanism is "absolute conflict." Here, the goal is the complete destruction of the enemy rather than the preferred, mutually agreed upon settlement by the conflicting parties. The latter is based upon rational calculation in which the contenders hold insights into each other's conduct. The more one knows about his adversary the more likely he is able to cope with him. With this knowledge of one another opponents can agree upon the rules and norms that realistically reflect each other's strength and willingness to act.<sup>41</sup>

#### Dahrendorf's Orientation-Conflict as the Organizing Force for Social Change

Ralf Dahrendorf is another one who joins Boulding in criticizing Coser for his exclusive focus on the integrative functions of social conflict at the expense of those types of social conflict that disrupt social systems and lead to radical changes.<sup>42</sup> His own definition of social conflict extends the term to include the broadest spectrum of antagonistic interaction.

. . . I am using the term 'conflict' in this study for contests, competitions, disputes, and tensions as well as for manifest clashes between social forces. All relations between

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<sup>40</sup>Coser, *Continuities*, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 37-52.

<sup>42</sup>Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208. Coser answers this charge, one to which he has often been subjected, by the writing of several articles on the social functions of violence. See Coser, *Continuities*.

sets of individuals that involve an incompatible difference of object--i.e. in its most general form, a desire on the part of both contestants to attain what is available only to one, or only in part--are, in this sense, relations of social conflict. The general concept of conflict does not as such imply any judgment as to the intensity or violence of relations caused by differences of objective.<sup>43</sup>

Dahrendorf comes to his understanding from a continuous dialogue that he carries on with Karl Marx and Talcott Parsons. Dahrendorf's critique of Parsons is essentially directed against the "conservative" bias implicit in a conceptual system that emphasizes problems of stability and order, while failing to explain phenomena of change and conflict. As his definition of conflict suggests, his own analysis stresses that part of the social structure which is characterized by power and coercion, strife and change. These elements have "equality reality" to those elements that accent permanence, stability, and social cohesion. This decision, he claims, is not intended to discard the conceptual apparatus of structural-functional theory. Rather, it serves as a supplement to "other" prevalent explanations of social change.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Dahrendorf's inclusive definition may also be extended to include situations which he calls latent interests that do not at the particular moment involve any form of active opposition, i.e. the psychological aspects underneath overt struggle. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-179. Thus, conflict can vary from peace demonstrations to civil war and can be manifested latently or overtly. "Wherever there is human life in society, there is conflict. Societies do not differ in that some have conflict and others not; societies and social units within them differ in the violence and intensity of conflicts." Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 145.

<sup>44</sup>Ralf Dahrendorf, "Toward a Theory of Social Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, II:2 (June 1958), 175; Ralf Dahrendorf,

From Marx he borrows his central thesis that social change is the normal and ongoing phenomenon of society. Not only are isolated parts of society in flux but the entire structure of society changes. Conflict which is identified as the cause of change has its source in the social structure itself. However, Dahrendorf differs from Marx who argued that property was the main structuring force that explained the antithesis of the classes. For Dahrendorf authority relationships are the basis of social conflict.<sup>45</sup>

#### Authority as Role Relationship

The connection of authority to social structures means in this context nothing else than authority resides in roles. The roles which Dahrendorf believes to be most emblematic are ones of domination and subjection or super- and subordination such as parent-child, teacher-student, and employer-employee. Four presuppositions underlie this basic relationship. First, the superordinate are expected to dominate the subordinate. Second, such a right to impose commands and prohibitions is based upon an inherited social tradition. Third, this right is limited by specified arenas of control as well as to certain categories of persons to be managed. It is not a license to dominate all situations and/or persons. Fourth, non-compliance to authoritative commands is sanctioned.<sup>46</sup>

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*Essays in the Theory of Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, pp. 3-35.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

Although Dahrendorf borrows his definition of authority from Weber, he notes that it is similar to the one held by Parsons. For each authority is an institution. For each the authority relationship is a specific form of complementary social behavior and is the main impetus for integrating the role structure of a social system.<sup>47</sup>

### Authority as the Source of Conflict

Dahrendorf differs with Parsons at the point where he attaches to authority functions that result in conflict rather than lead to integration.<sup>48</sup> The reasons for this assertion is that authority is always coercion of some over others. Those who rule over others not only enforce the prevailing norms but also they perform norm setting functions as well. " . . . there must always be at least that inequality of rank which results from the necessity of sanctioning behavior according to whether it does or does not conform to established norms."<sup>49</sup> Thus, the value system common to the whole society is imposed by the ruling classes.

*Classes* are defined in ways that are integrative to his understanding of the antagonistic roles of the rulers and the ruled.

"Class signifies conflict groups that are generated by differential

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 165-170.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. Dahrendorf contrasts his position with Parsons' by constructing a parallel chart between the structural-functional and coercion (conflict) models. See Appendix E.

<sup>49</sup>Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, p. 167.

distribution of authority in imperatively coordinated associations."<sup>50</sup>

No attempt is made in this definition to judge the rigidity or looseness of each class's internal cohesion, the presence or absence of a common ideology or culture held by each class's members, or the intensity or lack of intensity of each class's involvement in social conflict. Class energy is simply derived from role expectations within the operating system. Consequently, all assumptions about classes and their interests, their unity and conflicts, are ones about the normative system rather than the basis for the formation of any new value system rooted in a dynamic, coercive context.

Dahrendorf follows the same pattern of establishing structural conflict within the prevalent system when he introduces the concept of *interests*. Men are not unified together because deep cleavages are structured into social life. These cleavages account for opposing positions, interest roles or expected patterns of behavior.

Both power and resistance are structured socially. Those in power pursue certain interests by virtue of their position; and by these interests certain groups in society are tied to them. Similarly, opposition is based on interests, and social groups with these interests adhere to the opposition cause.<sup>51</sup>

Given this analysis the change agent would ordinarily strive to develop strategies to divide men even farther along these lines of cleavages.

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<sup>50</sup>Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 204. The phrase "imperatively coordinated associations" is Weber's translation of Herrschatsverband (coercively integrated collectives) which conveys the "probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>51</sup>Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society*, p.145.

He would do so because he holds profound confidence in the reality and power of these interests. They offer the impetus from which to motivate and organize persons into action. However, as it will be delineated more fully below, Dahrendorf refuses to grant the right of interest groups to bind together or for change agents to work for such collaboration. The existing system of authority relationships is not to be fundamentally changed.

*Roles* likewise are viewed as having different and contradicting expectations along authority and non-authority lines. Roles are interpreted in general terms as "the complexes of behavior expectations adhering to social position."<sup>52</sup> It is the function of superordinate roles to uphold the status quo and the function of subordinate roles to challenge the present system. The individual acts in compliance with his role if he contributes to the tension between contradicting interests or positions. Thus the category of role serves, as do class and interest, to demonstrate that conflict serves in Dahrendorf's theory as his analytical point of reference much like integration does in the structural-functional theory.

#### The Regulation of Conflict

Given the formulation of his conflict theory within the setting

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<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73. This definition is further expanded elsewhere by Dahrendorf. "1) Like positions, social roles are quasi-objective complexes of prescriptions for behavior which are in principle independent of the individual. 2) Their particular content is defined and redefined not by any individual, but by society. 3) The behavior expectations associated with roles are binding on the individual, in the sense that he cannot ignore or reject them without harm to himself." *Ibid.*, p. 37.



of authority relationships, it is not surprising that Dahrendorf chooses to speak of conflict regulation in lieu of conflict resolution or conflict suppression. To resolve conflict would mean to eliminate the energizing forces of his formula. To suppress conflict would leave open the probability of revolutionary ferment that would ultimately destroy the structural framework undergirding his theory. For similar reasons Dahrendorf confines conflict regulation to the manifestations of conflict rather than to their causes. The authority structure with its role allocations must not be basically altered.<sup>53</sup>

Three important ingredients form the conditions for conflict regulation. First, both parties to the conflict situation need to recognize each other's right to exist and to differ. Conflict can and does arise out of the authority structure of associations. Any illusions of false harmony and unity only leads to suppression of conflict, and the impending eruption of violence.<sup>54</sup> Second, the conflicting parties are encouraged to organize themselves into interest groups or unified parties. One of Coser's paradoxical proposals is quoted in support. "A unified party prefers a unified opponent."<sup>55</sup> While some dissension over issues may be present within the early stages of the newly formed allegiance, consensus should become the dominant style for decision making. Third, the opposing parties in social

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<sup>53</sup> Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 225.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>55</sup> Coser, *The Functions*, p. 132.

conflict are reminded to keep conflict within some kind of order. Change does not take place in chaos. Each party's interest is best protected by adoption of certain formal rules or procedures. "Normally that would include stipulations as to where and how to meet, how to proceed, how to reach decisions, what sanctions to apply in case of noncompliance, and when and how to change rules themselves."<sup>56</sup> Once these three prerequisites are met, then various forms of regulation--conciliation, meditation, arbitration, or any combination of the three--can be employed by change agents.

What Dahrendorf does with these three qualifications of conflict regulation is to institutionalize conflict in such a way as to reward the ruling classes. It is to their advantage to endorse these prerequisites since the procedures have been designed by them. Their repertoire is the one which is being used in the struggle for power. Distortion, polarization, and disruption, the weapons of the disenfranchised and the dominated, are forbidden.

#### Limitations of Dahrendorf's Theory of Conflict

As the above comments suggest, Dahrendorf's thesis does raise serious questions for those who are dominated or subjected. This judgment applies not only to the area of conflict regulation but also to the very foundation of the authority relationship, i.e. between norm-oriented behavior and interest-oriented behavior of the ruling

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<sup>56</sup>Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict*, p. 226.

classes. With legitimate authority being characterized by the expectations that rulers will rule and that the ruled will obey, it is quite conceivable that the ruled will expect the rulers to preserve the status quo. What is less conceivable is that the rulers concurrently expect the ruled to desire the overthrow of the prevailing order.<sup>57</sup>

These two mutually exclusive expectations, to obey and to revolt, push Dahrendorf to seek a voluntaristic guideline as a solution to the dilemma. Role expectations need not be internalized, since they are encountered through societal exposure. Each one has the freedom to accept or reject them as conscious orientations of actions.<sup>58</sup> Of course, it is to the individual's advantage to adapt the existing system of role expectations as his own. Rejection carries negative sanctions for the ungifted or easily discouraged.

This probability raises the question which has remained unanswered thus far. Is it possible for one to rise or to fall in authority positions? The answer lies with the individual who is a role occupant and by virtue of that designation a class member. With a change of roles, he changes his class membership. Social mobility by individuals becomes the only relevant principle by which individuals rise into authority positions or have to abandon them. Furthermore, large fluctuation in authority positions reduces the intensity of class conflicts.

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<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

The more upward and downward mobility there is in society, the less comprehensive and fundamental are class conflicts likely to be. As mobility increases, group solidarity is increasingly replaced by competition between individuals, and the energies invested by individuals in class conflict decrease.<sup>59</sup>

Care must be taken that this process of individual mobility is not mistaken for a reorientation of social structural criteria or an alteration of designated mechanisms by which incumbents of societal authority are chosen. It transcends neither the prevailing social structure nor the authoritative order. Precisely how new social groups evolve into political relevance is left unexplained. Ordinarily one might turn to an analysis of power. However, Dahrendorf's placement of power in the personality of individuals only supports the existing authoritative roles.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, what remains unaccounted is the allocation of social power whereby the change of the order of authority or its disintegration occurs by classes or groups. Unresolved is how the ruled attain the facilities and forces with which to overthrow the prevailing order. It is at this point, the change of classes of authority and social structures, that Dahrendorf needs to reassume his promising theoretical formulation.

In summary, the established authority relationship dominates Dahrendorf's theory of conflict. The ruling classes determine the culture of a people. Values are merely role interests which have been institutionalized as norms by the ruling classes. The ubiquity of

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

conflict correlates exactly with the ubiquity of authority. The source of conflict is not the scarcity of means as it was in part for Bennis and Coser. For Dahrendorf the distribution of power, status, and resources is only a secondary consequence of the legitimation of role interests as values which the possession of authority makes possible.

#### Implications of the Theories of Conflict for Churchmen

No doubt most churchmen identify with the position advocated by Warren Bennis. Collaboration, open communication, and problem solving processes serve as highly desirable means to contain conflict or to channel it into creative behavior. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated in conflict situations where opposing parties hold comparable positions of power. On the other hand, it has been ineffective where inequality of power between parties exists or where one party has no access to the processes of change. Of the three theorists noted, only Dahrendorf chose to deal with the complexities of power relations and the subsequent inadequacy of planned change exponents to take account of such divisions in authority.

If churchmen are to take seriously the conflict created between those who possess authority to command and those have little or none, they will need to work with the powerful and the powerless alike. With the former they will need to use their persuasive influence to affect an ordering of society whereby equal opportunities are structured into the political, economic, educational, and legal systems. With the

latter they need to form coalitions whereby the exploited, abused, and oppressed can obtain the resources and skills to insure their own self-determination. One tactic of the change agent who represents churchmen is the creation of dissonance in order to motivate each grouping to take the necessary action for shared power.

This proposal for churchmen to work with both groupings includes the adoption of strategies of conflict as well as ones of consensus. The contextual situation with its many given forces and personalities will determine which strategy will need to be employed. Through Coser's theorizing one learns that conflict can become an indispensable force in reaching desired goals. Conflict serves institutions as means to identity and authority. Conflict is necessary for group consciousness and group ego. It is essential for the identification of the strength of one's own group as well as one's opponent.

This petition for conflict strategies to be added to ones of consensus in the churchmen's portfolio is made with the full awareness that the tactics of conflict can be destructive. This truth is recognized by all three theorists and explains why each has argued for the management of conflict. If conflict is not to destroy the existing social structures, it needs to be incorporated into existing mechanisms for its regulation. If such a mechanism for procedural containment of conflict does not exist or is inoperative, then they need to be instituted. Otherwise, the creative energies emerging around internal and external conflict are wasted or become negative forces.

A fundamental assumption underlies this argument for the

institutionalization of conflict. The framework of conflict is autonomous in the sense that conflict by its very nature sets into operation a predictable movement that can be followed step by step toward increased intensity and polarization. Lee and Galloway speak of this phenomenon as having "an inner imperative to unfold in predictable (and often precarious) ways."<sup>61</sup> They cite James Coleman's analysis to document their thesis that conflict moves in certain condensing steps. These steps are as follows:

1. An issue is presented.
2. The issue disrupts the equilibrium of community relations.
3. Previously suppressed issues come to the surface.
4. More and more of the opponents' beliefs enter the disagreement.
5. The opponents appear totally bad.
6. Charges are made against the opponents as persons.
7. The dispute becomes independent of the original disagreement.<sup>62</sup>

Lee and Galloway see this evolvment of conflict to be independent from any human design or intention, though they do concur with theorists of social conflict that the negative pattern of conflict can be broken by man and channeled into constructive learnings for him.<sup>63</sup> Whether or not the emergence of conflict can be isolated from human interference requires careful inquiry. Behind this question lie even more basic issues that touch upon anthropological presuppositions for churchmen engaged in conflict. The following chapter is directed toward the investigation of the views of man implicit in the conflict theories of Bennis, Coser, and Dahrendorf and the potential contributions these findings offer for the contemporary church.

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<sup>61</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

## CHAPTER III

### ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Any serious attempt to delineate the anthropological presuppositions integral to a particular theory of social conflict is complicated by the fact that they rarely are stated explicitly. More often the students must devise a methodology to organize implicit data. Perry LeFevre, who has published several studies in theological anthropology, has proposed a viable approach whereby one can systemize and interpret inferential findings. He suggests that most theories about man can be arranged around three central questions or themes.

First, a theory of man carries the assumption, something is wrong with man; it usually carries an answer to the question, What is wrong with man? Second, such a theory also contains a normative judgment--a view of what ought to be or could be. That is, a second central motif has to do with the nature of human fulfillment, with what the good man is. Finally a third theme has to do with the way of moving from what is wrong with man to what man is 'meant to be' or what his fulfillment as man is.<sup>1</sup>

When possible, LeFevre's proposal will be followed as the anthropological stances of Bennis, Coser, and Dahrendorf are summarized. Theological connotations, if relevant, will also be noted and discussed.

#### Warren Bennis--The Professional Man

Bennis' perspective of man can be discovered in his basic

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<sup>1</sup>Perry LeFevre, *Man* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), p. 19.



philosophy of managerial behavior. He contends that he has witnessed in the business community over the last two decades the emergence of a new concept of man. Replaced as the "oversimplified, innocent push-button idea of man" is an image based on "increased knowledge of his complex and shifting needs."<sup>2</sup> Bennis sees this shift occurring in three discernible stages.

On the scene first was the "great man" whose genius and audacity empowered him with near dictatorial authority as the corporate executive. Ordinarily he was a man attached to a single idea or to a constellation of parallel ideas which he himself had developed with skill. This same expertise proved to be his undoing when he refused to alter his original plan in a period that called for technological innovation. In turn, loss of morale in management and labor occurred since neither was permitted to participate in what determined the content and quality of their work. The net result was the slippage of the company into a secondary position in a highly competitive market.<sup>3</sup>

Assuming the role of the "great man" in the business world was the "organization man." His entrance represented a more flexible corporate unit wherein various roles became interchangeable. No longer was any position indispensable. For some the new role meant anonymity and homogeneity which bred bizarre anomalies and hybrids. For others,

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<sup>2</sup>*The Planning of Change* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), p. 573.

<sup>3</sup>Warren G. Bennis and Philip E. Slater, *The Temporary Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 10.

including Bennis, it was simply a necessary transitional phenomenon toward "democraticization" whereby the availability of knowledge and experience could be maximized in a setting of rapid change.<sup>4</sup>

From the often documented description of the "organization man" has emerged the "professional man" whom Bennis sees to be the personification of the democratic system. He is a specialist who may hold an advanced degree in cryogenics or computer logic as well as an elementary one in business-economics. He is a highly adaptive person and is committed to participatory decision making. He is not afraid of turbulence in organizational life; in fact he thrives on perpetual transition and constant movement.<sup>5</sup> Employing paradoxical language Bennis describes his role thusly: "(He) attempts to upset nothing, but strives to facilitate the potential upset of anything."<sup>6</sup>

#### Basic Attributes of the Professional Man

The professional man embodies the coveted virtues of truth and love. "Somehow the hope prevails that man is reasonable and caring, and that valid data, coupled with an environment of trust (and love)

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere Bennis berates any attempt by specialists to hold illusions of unique identity which might cause them to view others with suspicion and mistrust. For support he quotes from a recent essay by Erik Erikson who labels such a tendency as the creation of a "pseudo species." *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 12.

will bring about the desired change."<sup>7</sup> By love Bennis has in mind the incarnation of democratic processes alluded to in the above paragraph. Love couched in democratic network is not to be confused with either a permissive or a laissez-faire style. Instead, he speaks of a climate of values governing behavior that men affirm by deeds as well as words. These values include the following:

1. Full and free communication, regardless of rank and power.
2. A reliance on consensus, rather than the more customary forms of coercion or compromise to manage conflict.
3. The idea that influence is based on technical competence and knowledge rather than on the vagaries of personal whims or prerogatives of power.
4. An atmosphere that permits and even encourages emotional expression as well as task-oriented acts.
5. A basically human bias, one that accepts the inevitability of conflict between the organization and the individual, but that is willing to cope with and mediate this conflict on rational grounds.<sup>8</sup>

By truth Bennis denotes an attitude frequently associated with the ethos of science. Described as a "spirit of inquiry," it entails a hypothetical feeling for tentativeness and the respect for probable error. A second characteristic involves experimentation or the willingness to expose ideas to empirical testing, to decision making

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<sup>7</sup>Warren G. Bennis, *Organization Development* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 77.

<sup>8</sup>Bennis and Slater, *op. cit.*, p. 4. Also see Edgar H. Schein and Warren G. Bennis, *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1965), pp. 33-35.

and to acting.<sup>9</sup>

By placing love within a democratic context and truth within an analytical framework Bennis seeks not only to humanize the organizational processes for problem solving but also desires to insure "personal growth and the development of self-realization."<sup>10</sup> Such individual maturation takes place most advantageously among like-minded persons who alternately confront and support one another. In this setting man fulfills his need for transcendental experiences, "somewhat like the psychological awards that William James claimed religion provided--'an assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affection.'"<sup>11</sup> By transcendence Bennis seeks to preserve a concept of human nature whereby man acquires and realizes his essential selfhood by surmounting himself through close interpersonal relationships. He has no intention to introduce any notion of sacred presence or divine intervention. It is these interpersonal associations that enable man to be able to stand outside himself as a physical-psychological-social being with some degree of objectivity.

Extreme care is taken to preserve man's individual freedom in the truth-love context. Insights that serve to strengthen this freedom are derived from such diverse disciplines as evolutionary biology,

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>Bennis, *Organizational Development*, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

cultural anthropology and social research. Whether or not these new learnings about single man have authority when applied to man's neighbors is not questioned. It is simply assumed that they do on the basis that one can take confidence in man's self interest to be a benevolent person.

Bennis argues that those individuals who contract for his services as a consultant are people who demonstrate "hopeful" claims about man's nature. These claims which are supported by the findings of the behavioral sciences are the following:

1. They desire personal growth and development.
2. They fight and resist significant changes in which they have had no part in bringing into existence.
3. They require a compatible group if growth is to take place.
4. They react in "neighborly ways" when they feel unthreatened and have high self-esteem.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, confidence abounds that the professional man can discover with his peers ways in which institutional structures can function to insure self-liberation and self-actualization for employees without reducing high productivity for the employer.

#### Formation of the Professional Man

Organization development provides the framework in which Bennis' professional man can reach maturation. This approach combines the theory and technology of laboratory training with the methodologies

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.

of organizational change and management education. Laboratory training is directed to the emotional as well as to the cognitive level. Care is taken to see how reason and feeling affect man's relationship with others and his capacity for attaining high competence. In contrast to therapy groups where group members see themselves and others as having psychological problems and needing help, participants in laboratory training or "T" groups are seen as relatively well functioning individuals interested in improving old skills and learning new ones. Repairs and restoration of functions are not among its objectives. "Unlike the older professions, where the focus is on disease or delinquency or sin, organization development is a practice that involves a normative stance, that is, it is a program that concentrates on health and improvement . . ."<sup>13</sup>

The more recent stress on changing institutional theory and practice is a conscious attempt to try to balance the heavy emphasis placed upon group development and interpersonal transactions so predominant in the formative period of laboratory training. Its inclusion acknowledges the need to shift more directly from the individual to the corporation within which he is employed. There is a growing consensus that re-education and behavior changes are unlikely to endure unless the working environment assimilates these new learnings and provides the impetus for further growth.

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55. For a condensed review and perceptive critique of laboratory training see Bernard Lubin and William B. Eddy, "The Laboratory Training Model: Rationale, Method and Some Thoughts About the Future," *International Journal for Group Psychotherapy*, XX:3 (July 1970), 305-39.

Deficiencies in the Professional Man

Basically, Bennis' concept of the professional man and its adoption as a viable model assumes that men are alike. It has great faith in the power and reality of ideas and values which men can discover together if they will but allow truth to emerge in a free and open encounter. Truth, in this instance, not only means the correlation of the group's statements with the actual conditions they experience in life but also it implies the acting out of this truth in a climate which supports and re-enforces the new behavior and encourages continuing development.

What the image of the professional man does not fully take into account are old theological problems of the use man makes of his freedom in truth and love, of his bondage to self-concern, and of his overt and covert attempts to change society according to his personal interests. In a scientific age that has added significantly to human understanding, intelligent and realistic convictions about one's self and his responsibility to the larger community are now more necessary than ever.

Nor does Bennis' concept of the professional man take seriously enough the structures of society beyond the vocational setting that shape men's lives and set their options. Social systems do possess the power to impact, if not control, mankind's nature and destiny. In this sense they are fraught with political dangers of tyranny as well as with the social dangers of dehumanization. In contrast, they can carry the impetus to free the tyrannized and the dehumanized. One who

was more conscious of the powerful influence of groups and systemic networks throughout society was Lewis Coser, and to him I now turn.

### Lewis Coser--The Pluralistic Man

In writing a critique of Emile Durkheim's social theory, Coser allocates only a single sentence to man's nature. In it he states the obvious: "Traditionally the conservative has been given to a pessimistic interpretation of human nature and he has pitted his view against the progressivist beliefs in the perfectibility of man."<sup>14</sup> By emphasizing the rather self-evident contrast between the pessimistic and progressive views of man, Coser not only illustrates the casual, horizontal perspective he brings to sociological problems but also casts a light upon his own portrait of man.

Man can be painted in rather broad strokes in such a way that his existence is necessarily bound up with social structures that require disharmony as well as harmony, dissociation as well as association. As one who is contemporary, urban, peripheral, he places little or no value on issues of self-identity and community consciousness. Whereas traditional man has seen change to be disruptive, the "pluralistic man" adapts easily to the ebb and flow of life by participating segmentally in various groupings.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Lewis A. Coser, *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1967), p. 175.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.



The Incomplete Image--Parsonsian Man

Coser uses Talcott Parsons' image of man as a foil to reflect his own anthropological views. According to Coser the "parsonsian man" places maximum value on permanence, maintenance, and social cohesion. If he ever speaks of personal or social difficulties, he does so in terms of strain and tension that connote injury due to excessive pressure from the social systems in which man resides. Conflict is clearly a disintegrative phenomenon and is usually equated with deviant behavior or else is seen as a disease in need of treatment. "Conflict appears to him as partly avoidable, partly inevitable and 'endemic' form of sickness in the body social."<sup>16</sup>

The "parsonsian man" engages in communal decisions with those who have similar positions and rankings and/or with those whom he associates intimately. The issues of contrasting life styles and differential authority relationships with other members of the community are ignored. When communal conflict is raised, it is treated as a pathological condition which upsets the normal state of societal equilibrium.

More recently there has emerged a sophisticated version of the "parsonsian man," one that shows a close resemblance to the "professional man" described earlier by Warren Bennis. For Coser this self acclaimed social scientist is trained to deal with emotional factors

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<sup>16</sup>Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1956), p. 23.

which block understanding and communication. He is not prepared to resolve the more basic issues which divide men, i.e. the competition over scarce resources. Until he is willing to alter his basic bias against conflict, he will continue to function as a partial human being. Man grows into maturity only in a setting that places equal value on stability and conflict.<sup>17</sup>

#### Basic Orientation of the Pluralistic Man

As a social theorist Coser strives to confine his observations of pluralistic man "to the behavior of individuals in groups."<sup>18</sup> It is never man as man but man as a member of a group, clan, tribe, guild, or class that is important. Ethical values are derived solely from these closely knit and influential groups. Consequently, very little effort is made by Coser to reflect on ways which personal growth takes place. Only as individual drives such as aggression, hostility, resentment and repression intervene into social patterns do they become pertinent.

A case in point is his explanation of aggression. Aggression can be clearly attributed to reciprocal relationships among individuals rather than to psychic drives within man.<sup>19</sup> This is true even for

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8. While Coser makes this claim for a balanced stress on stability and conflict, one suspects that his use of stability is only appropriate as the temporary balance of conflicting forces.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup>From the psychological perspective aggression is seen as innate instinct in man. Both healthy and disturbed people show

those tensions that build up over a period of time, since they have their origin in past interactions of individuals. "It (aggression) may be thought as having accumulated in the interaction between the subject and others--parents or other frustrating agents--during the socialization process and in the individual's effort to live up to later role obligations."<sup>20</sup>

By nature the societal man creates conflict through his struggles with other persons over values and claims to scarce goods, power, and resources or over the need for release of repressed tensions which these struggles have created.<sup>21</sup> He ordinarily tries to handle

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aggression but the disturbed persons' aggression breaks out in impulsive and explosive ways. One of the most important contributions to our understanding of aggression in this century comes from the work of the ethnologist Konrad Lorenz who labels his own studies in aggression as "behavioral physiology." In his book appropriately entitled *On Aggression* Lorenz stresses not only the fact that aggression is a major drive with which men must cope but also states that it has served a positive and vital function in the evolution of the species, including man. The most constructive use of aggression is its conversion into a bonding force--the binding together of individuals in social units. See Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963).

<sup>20</sup>Coser, *The Functions*, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup>As noted in the second chapter Coser insists on the distinction being made between realistic and nonrealistic types of conflict. "Each social system contains sources of realistic conflict insofar as people raise conflicting claims to scarce status, power and resources, and adhere to conflicting values. The allocation of status, power and resources, though governed by norms and role allocation systems, will continue to be an object of contention to some degree. Realistic conflicts arise when men clash in the pursuit of claims based on frustration of demands and expectancies of gains. Nonrealistic conflict arise from deprivations and frustrations stemming from the socialization process and from later adult role obligations, or they result, . . . from a conversion of originally realistic antagonism which was disallowed expression." *Ibid.*, p. 54.

his conflicts with others in a collective unit and in so doing the group or association receives its identity. " . . . the distinction between 'ourselves, the we-group or in-group and everybody else, or the other-groups, out-groups' is established in and through conflict."<sup>22</sup>

The out-group may be emulated as well as resented, although the latter alternative is far more likely to occur. Resentment may either take the form of attitude or behavior. The former type usually serves as a predisposition to engage in conflict proper, while the latter type transpires in the interaction between two or more persons and thus becomes the conflict proper. Whether attitudes and feelings of resentment actually lead to overt conflict depends on whether or not the unequal distribution of rights is considered legitimate. When such distribution is no longer considered justifiable, then individuals with similar objectives constitute themselves into self-conscious groupings.<sup>23</sup>

#### Realization of the Pluralistic Man

When Coser has individuals find their true identity inside groupings that have been germinated or impacted by conflict, he hopes to persuade his critics to examine once again the "various conditions under which social conflict may contribute to the maintenance, adjustment or adaptation of social relationship and social

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 35-38.

structures."<sup>24</sup> He knows that man is profoundly affected by these conditions, and by modifying the conditions under which he lives his life, man can bring about a fundamental change in himself and his fellowman.

Coser demonstrates this interlocking of man with societal conditions on several occasions. One such instance occurs when he theorizes about the place of personal freedom in primary and secondary groupings. His projections create surprise when he contends that personal freedom is greatly enhanced when an individual affiliates with a variety of secondary groupings. In secondary relationships like those with business partners and/or civic club members feelings of hostility can be expressed with relative liberty. This is not the case in primary relations such as those among members of a family where total involvement of the participants makes the acting out of such feelings a threat to the relationship. This reticence to level with persons in primary associations often leads to accumulation of hostile feelings until they burst open under intense pressure. In secondary relationship where segmental involvement of the participants take place, the presence of conflict is not only expected but also serves as an accurate index to group life.<sup>25</sup>

Coser's argument for the interlinkage of man with societal conditions is so basic and persuasive that it appears inadequate, to

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 60-65, 85.

say the least, to attempt to define man in individual terms. Any interpretation of who and what man is must take into account the whole fabric of relationships in which he exists with others. What is questionable in Coser's formulation is the peripheral manner in which he believes society can be held together without a prevailing sense of community. For him society is undergirded by some kind of contrived element of human existence which is expressed in an ethos of pluralism.

A pluralistic society that has no room for community also has no place for matters of history and eschatology. Man-in-community is a creature involved in a common history in which he plays a limited but integral part. The interrelation of himself with others comes to expression concretely in the responsibilities and actions which he shares with others in determining the moving course of events. Man does not alone create his own future, but it is clear that his future does not come without his active participation in and responsibility for it. He does not passively receive; he shares in the destiny toward which he is summoned.

Coser's silence in these matters of history and eschatology is consistent with his deliberate decision to approach his data solely from the perspective of a social scientist. For him it is not the responsibility of the social theorist to raise questions which lie in the jurisdiction of the historian, the theologian or the moralist. Nowhere is the professional line of demarcation more pointedly drawn than it is in his analysis of violence and deviance where he distinguishes sharply between ethical judgment and sociological assessment.

As a sociologist he rejects the popular thesis that when something makes a contribution or provides a vital social function it must necessarily be right and moral. Conversely, he refutes the common idea that when something interrupts essential social functions it must always be wrong and immoral. Certain types of violence serve a number of societal functions for the general public.<sup>26</sup> In a like manner some types of deviance are found to have made major contributions to the ongoing life of society.<sup>27</sup> "One cannot even form the notion of order without the contrasting notion of disorder, nor can conformity be conceived without a contrasting concept of deviance against which conformity can be measured."<sup>28</sup>

Had Coser been more open to interdisciplinary studies with theologians or ethicists he may have not placed as much confidence in finite man. While man's capacity for goodness and creativity is indefinite, man's history is throughout characterized by a profound and tragic denial of the purpose of human existence. Likewise, had Coser engaged in a dialectic exchange with "communication" specialists, he may have had a more realistic expectation for man in small groupings. In the kind of society that technology helps to create, human identity does not rest exclusively on the small and personal type of associations. It tends increasingly to depend on mass media where the

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<sup>26</sup>Coser, *Continuities*, pp. 73-110.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 111-133.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

individual assimilates knowledge and values with large numbers of other persons whom he never sees or knows.

On the other hand cross-disciplinary pursuits between social scientists and churchmen may have saved the latter a great amount of needless institutional disruption. For instance, as early as the mid-1950's Coser laid forth a pragmatic guideline for those working in the midst of organizational conflict which apparently never reached most Christian audiences. " . . . conflict tends to be dysfunctional for a social structure in which there is no or insufficient toleration and institutionalization of conflict."<sup>29</sup>

#### Ralf Dahrendorf--The Dialectic Man

Ralf Dahrendorf is one of several social theorists who does pursue an interdisciplinary approach. The most recent demonstration of his diverse interests appears in a translation of assorted papers published under the English title, *Essays in the Theory of Society*.<sup>30</sup> In these treatises he addresses issues pertinent for students in the fields of philosophy, psychology, economics, and sociology. Characteristic of each article is a style of inquiry which may be described as a "spirit of creative disequilibrium." For him human experience is so complex and transitional that it cannot be discussed without

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<sup>29</sup> Coser, *The Functions*, p. 157.

<sup>30</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Essays in the Theory of Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).



continually keeping the apparent contradictions and tensions of life in mind. Since life is seen as a series of paradoxes, it is only reasonable that Dahrendorf uses a modified version of Hegelian logic as his methodological approach to truth.<sup>31</sup> He parts from Hegel's formula only in the third level. For him there is no kind of peaceful reconciliation of opposites in successive syntheses. Instead, in the perpetual strain and stress of existence, never resolved, one finds the truth about man's finite mode of existence.<sup>32</sup>

#### Paradoxical Man--Images from Sociology and Morality

The dialectic method is used to depict the contrast between

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<sup>31</sup>Hegel affirmed that it was the very nature of reason to posit a thesis that generates into antithesis, that in turn leads to a synthesis reconciling both thesis and antithesis. Hegel believed that this logical pattern provided a clue to the nature of reality itself. His application of this logic to history was very influential for the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx who professed to see to the same laws at work in the economic affairs of men. Previously noted has been Dahrendorf's dependence upon Marxian formulations.

<sup>32</sup>Indicative of the dialectic style is the following quote from one of Dahrendorf's treatises. "The structures of power in which the political process takes place offer an explanation not only of how change originates and what direction it takes, but also of why it is necessary. Power always implies non-power and therefore resistance. The dialectic of power and resistance is the motive force of history. From the interests of those in power at a given time we can infer the interests of the powerless, and with them the direction of change. Here is the nexus where norms are laid down, called into question, modified, and called into question again. Here is the source of initiative, and thus of the historicity--and that means the vitality, the openness, the freedom--of human societies. Power produces conflict, and conflict between antagonistic interests gives lasting expression to the fundamental uncertainty of human existence, by ever giving rise to new solutions and ever casting doubt on them as soon as they take form." Dahrendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

sociological man and moral man. Sociological man (*homo sociologicus*) is the artificial creation of theoretical analysts. These men strive to define with scientific preciseness the juncture where the individual intersects society. In so doing they seek to meet the standards of technical scholarship.

Every discipline, if it is to make its statements precise and testable, must reduce its huge subject matter to certain elements from which may be systematically constructed, if not a portrait of the reality of experience, then a structure in whose tissue a segment of reality may be caught.<sup>33</sup>

The elements that provide social scientists with categories in which to describe human behavior are these ones: position, role, role expectation, and sanction. Persons in every society perceived themselves or others as "possessors of certain attributes or the incumbents of certain positions." Since every society is constituted by complex, multidimensional structures of role differentiation, a person may find himself placed in roles and role relationships such as father-son, coach-player, and pastor-parishioner. What solidifies these structures of social positions is role behavior. By virtue of certain role expectations, each person adopts his role according to the perimeter set by society. A pastor behaves in a congenial, non-offensive way because his parishioners and/or he believe this kind of conduct is consistent with his predecessors' style of ministry. These role expectations become binding at the moment the pastor assumes the administrative office. When the pastor accepts or conforms to the role

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<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

expectation of a clergyman, he is rewarded. Conversely, when he rebels against the same role expectation, he is punished.<sup>34</sup>

The adoption of a role expectation is not completed until the individual internalizes for himself the substance of the role and the sanctions that enforce them. Observation, imitation, indoctrination, and conscious learning are all approved means for assimilating what society holds in readiness for the incumbent of positions. Once this internalization process is finalized, then the individual and society are joined to give birth to "homo sociologicus."<sup>35</sup>

The image of "homo sociologicus" is characterized by both negative and positive connotations. He is a determined creature through and through, a result of invariant causal relationships, a factor within a necessitating social process. He is a figure of depersonalization--pale, strange, incomplete, and artificial. He has sacrificed his freedom to be unique, creative, honest, self-respectful. Yet, despite these conspicuous limitations he functions as the means to systemize human life around us.

Homo sociologicus can neither love nor hate, laugh nor cry . . . Yet he is more than the showpiece of an exhibit. He provides the standard by which our world--and indeed our friend, our colleague, our father, our brother--becomes comprehensive for us.<sup>36</sup>

Dahrendorf argues that it is no accident that the creators of

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<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

"homo sociologicus" have ignored concerns ordinarily classified as moral. It was inevitable that such would be the case from the moment that sociology entered the field of scientific analysis. Moral inquiry and sociological investigation are incompatible with one another. As soon as sociologists interpret their findings in ethical categories, they must necessarily renounce their observations of social reality. As long as they strive for scientific insights, they must set aside moral concerns of the individual and his freedom. What makes the division between moral and sociological aspects so urgent lies not with the fact that sociology has not deviated from its proper calling. On the contrary the paradox has been intensified precisely because it has taken its scientific commitment seriously.<sup>37</sup> Of course, behind this radical separation looms more important questions. Is man a social being whose behavior is calculable and controllable? Or, is he an autonomous being with freedom to act as he chooses?

#### Dichotomy Between Determinism and Freedom

Whether or not the contradiction of dialectic man as a role playing, determinant creature and as a sovereign person can be or needs to be resolved is squarely faced by Dahrendorf. He asks, "Is there a necessary contradiction between the moral image of man as an integral, unique and free creature and his scientific image as a differentiated, exemplary aggregate of predetermined roles?"<sup>38</sup> For an

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 78.

answer to the apparent impasse created by the dichotomy of man's free, yet conditioned, response he turns to Immanuel Kant's formulation in the third antinomy of pure reason. Dahrendorf believes that Kant would indicate that each of these two versions of man could be justified by a logically conclusive argument and could be the thesis and antithesis of an argument that defies immanent resolution. Such is the case because there exists outside of man's experience, though accessible to him, a being in itself, a *Ding an sich*, that enables one to leave the paradox of freedom and determinism in an unresolvable antinomy.<sup>39</sup>

While Dahrendorf would like to adopt Kant's assumptions as his own, he cannot do so in lieu of his conviction that thesis and antithesis are not incompatible with one another in philosophical discourse. Instead, he affirms that they are different approaches by which one comprehends the same subject. Each is derived from different, though legitimate, sources of knowledge.

Although the free, integral individual is not accessible to empirical research and cannot be, we know about him in ourselves and in others. And although the constructed, conditioned exemplar is based on the systematic study of phenomena, all the study in the world cannot make it more than a construction of the mind.<sup>40</sup>

The contradiction between the cognitive statements, man is indivisible and free and man is an aggregate of roles and conditioned, poses no serious problem for Dahrendorf until it makes its appearance in the empirical arena where the partial matters of morality are

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

ever pressing. Then it becomes incumbent on each social scientist to decide whether sociology by transforming man into "homo sociologicus" has cast himself as a supporter, if not a promoter, of inequality and inequity. The possibility for a social scientist to surrender his integrity becomes even more probable when one notes the readiness of the public to replace the authority of common sense with one of scientific theory. Dahrendorf fears that man is not far from replacing the autonomous, integral individual with the determined, synthetic, individual as the model for self-perception.<sup>41</sup>

What is required of the responsible sociologist, who is the personification of dialectic man, is to face honestly the unresolved conflict in which his role has placed him. On the one hand he is expected to utilize all the scientific expertise at his command. On the other hand he is expected to help liberate man from his enslavement to self and the world. His task is complicated if he fails to recognize that the social sciences are not in themselves a neutral force. Rather, they "constitute a great moral force, which, if not deliberately harnessed, works so strongly against liberty and individuality that a morality independent of science cannot withstand it."<sup>42</sup>

The ethically sensitive social scientist demonstrates his awareness of the momentum of his trade in several ways. He does so when he chooses his research projects with a consciousness of what emancipates individuals from the bondages of society. He does so when

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

he formulates a hypothesis with an intent to expand the range of man's free choice. He does so when he supports political programs dedicated to increase individual liberty. Finally, he does so when he insists upon the superior rights of moral man over artificial man.<sup>43</sup>

The question of freedom and determinism that Dahrendorf raises so appropriately with his professional peers is one familiar to other disciplines. Theologians see the issue largely as centering upon God's sovereignty and grace and man's autonomy and free will. While theologians with historical and contemporary interests continue to see the relationship to be significant, their arguments will not be introduced or interpreted here in lieu of a more immediate task.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 85-87. It is interesting that Dahrendorf, who emphasizes authority and power relations, makes no mention of the obligations that social scientists may have for those less powerful groups and institutions. Could not the knowledge and techniques possessed by social scientists be made available to such groups and institutions as well as to the more affluent, powerful ones?

<sup>44</sup>One way in which the history of the Christian church can be read is to note how Christians have understood the paradox of sovereign grace-free will. A recent study by Charles Glock and Rodney Stark is a case in point. It is their postulation that the ideological assumptions of the Christian doctrine of man that stress man's absolute autonomy undergirds racial prejudice. They write: "Underlying traditional Christian thought is an image of man as a free actor, as essentially unfettered by social circumstances, free to choose and thus free to effect his own salvation. This free will conception of man has been central to the doctrines of sin and salvation. For only if man is totally free does it seem just to hold him responsible for his acts, to punish him for his sins, and to demand repentance . . . The significance of this for prejudice is that radical and traditional Christian images of man prompt those who hold them to put the blame for disadvantage upon the individuals who are disadvantaged. A radical free-will image of man makes for an inability to perceive the effect of those forces outside the individual which may utterly dominate his circumstances . . . The simple fact seems to be that a great many church people, because they believe men are mainly in control of their own

Placed in question form it is: What are the theological implications of the twofold image of man, as a determined creature and as a free lord, which the enterprise of social sciences have cast upon our generation? An answer directly stated is: Man as a whole is more free than sociologists picture him to be as "homo sociologicus," but moral man is more determined by the social forces of role, class, nation, and race and the inward forces of hostility, anxiety, and ambition than many moralists seem to admit. Only if all men realized how ambiguously the knowledge and techniques of sociologists can be used, can they begin to deal creatively with the new ethical problems which the social sciences raises. Sociologists in particular need to recognize that the basic moral affirmations required to shape the ethical axioms for the employment of their knowledge and techniques must go beyond their individual consciences. Here the affirmations of faith must count and the kinds of communities of faith will be decisive.

Another way to formulate an answer is to argue that while the social sciences have helped to free man and to extend his power in society, they cannot ultimately sustain mankind. They do not reinterpret for us the classical religious and moral images of man and of society on which our future must rest no less than our past has. The social sciences, for the most part, deal with man as a creature of history, but not with man as the creator of history. They speak of

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individual destinies, think that Negroes are largely to blame for their present misery." Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, "Prejudice and the Churches" in *Prejudice U.S.A.* (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 80-82.



man as the product of society but not as the producer of community. Finally, they do not introduce us at all to the comprehensive image of man as the creature who is addressed by God. Some such horizon of eternity is necessary if man's transcendence of social and cultural conditioning is to remain a possibility.

### Anthropological Underpinnings for Conflict Management in the Local Church

When one reviews the anthropological dimensions implicit in the writings of these three social theorists, he is impressed by the strong confirmation of man-in-society whose basic nature is to become a center of freedom and truth. Bennis' "professional man" exhibits great confidence in the power of ideals and values which men can discover together if they will but allow truth to emerge in a free and open exchange. Coser's "pluralistic man" is an adaptive being whose existence is necessarily bound up with social structures that require disharmony as well as harmony. Dahrendorf's "dialectic man" thrives on perpetual strain and stress in which man's various authoritative roles place him.<sup>45</sup> Without conflict no change occurs in man or in his institutions.

These rather positive perspectives of man-in-society can well be indispensable to the dynamics of congregational life. When

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<sup>45</sup>The main stream of theological anthropology that flows through Paul, the apostle, Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, and Reinhold Niebuhr sees man in conflict between the old and new man. In this sense they hold more affinity to Dahrendorf's paradoxical figure than they do with the anthropological images created by Coser and Bennis.

Christian people committed to the interaction of free personalities and the providence of God gather to make decisions, they can become the agents to formulate an ethics of conflict. This is to say, the search for truth amid honest communication of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings as well as within procedural management of differences is one way that the church can define the faith and form of the Christian life. Such settings characterized by confrontation, yet mutual support, can become the primary means by which the local church develops its own theology and polity. By learning to deal with conflict, the church can move toward a new understanding of what it should be. In so doing it lends credence to the possibility that the social sciences can enlighten the church regarding the nature of those persons who constitute its membership.

## CHAPTER IV

### EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

#### Criteria for Evaluation

The increasing number of conflict situations within parishes has caused churchmen to reappraise their stance toward conflict as well as their means for coping with controversial issues. Among the churchmen who are striving to develop the attitudes and structures necessary for the appropriation of new learnings derived from conflict incidences have been those persons involved in Project Understanding. The project included the placing of nine seminary students in a program of internships located in North Hollywood, Pasadena, Reseda, San Diego, and Temple City, California. The interns were paired in teams in each of the locales except the San Fernando Valley where three men were assigned jointly to the North Hollywood and Reseda sites. Since the seminarians were assigned for the purpose of experimenting with training and strategy in an attempt to counter white racism in suburban communities, the project provides a promising framework around which to delineate categories for dealing with conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The categories whereby one can systemize and interpret the conflict centered data collected in the five locations of the project are

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<sup>1</sup>See "Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I," (Claremont, CA.: School of Theology at Claremont), pp. 1-29. For a description of each locale see Appendix A.

numerous.<sup>2</sup> I have chosen two. The first entails an effort to construct a set of conditions that were operative when conflict occurred in the project. These conditions are examined within the contexts of contracting, goal setting, leadership of the change agents, team building, and data collection in congregations. The second endeavor involves the disclosure of techniques employed by project personnel to manage and/or resolve conflict. Among the techniques discussed were the development of personal skills and group resources, the institutionalization of conflict in congregational structures, and the co-optation of antagonists.

In order to avoid false expectations on the part of the reader it is necessary to stress that the change agents or staff members did not engage in what may be classified as disruptive or revolutionary tactics. Rather, the prevailing style demonstrated by them was a cooperative one. Several factors contributed to the conscious choice for consensus. The homogeneity of the persons nominated or recruited to each local steering committee is one such factor. Committee personnel were predominantly white, middle class, median aged, well educated, politically moderate-liberal, and mainline Protestants.<sup>3</sup> A second

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<sup>2</sup>As indicated in the first chapter of the dissertation this data has been obtained through my role as observer-researcher in Project Understanding. Eighty-seven persons were interviewed in the five locations. The number of interviewees in each location were as follows: Pasadena (21), San Diego (21), San Fernando Valley East (14), San Fernando Valley West (17), and Temple City (14). Of the eighty-seven respondents nine were staff members, twenty-seven were clergymen, and fifty-one were laymen.

<sup>3</sup>There are exceptions to each of these homogeneous characteris-

factor for adopting a conciliatory strategy is the respect given to internal cohesiveness in Protestant churches. Confrontational approaches to induce change are ordinarily avoided or scorned.<sup>4</sup> A third factor for consensus based procedures is directly attributable to the training received by the nine seminary interns from the COMMIT staff. This training places a heavy accent upon "group process" and "problem solving" techniques. Hence, no confrontational strategies were included in COMMIT's equipping of the seminarians.<sup>5</sup> A fourth factor for the employment of consensus is because of the personalities

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tics. For instance, the composition of racial, religious and age classifications, ones which lend themselves to statistical data, reveal slight diversities. Of the eighty-seven persons interviewed in the project eighty-six were white. The identification of faith orientations or denominational memberships disclose that seventy-one interviewees belong to the mainlined or established Protestant churches such as the Disciples of Christ, the Lutheran Church in America, the Protestant Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Other religious traditions represented were Roman Catholic (7), Jewish (4), Unitarian-Universalists (3), and the Society of Friends (2). Only three single young adults and five older adults were interviewed among the eighty-seven respondents. The remainder of the others could be placed in an age bracket from the early thirties to the mid-fifties.

<sup>4</sup>Whether or not the tradition of the Christian Church should be interpreted according to consensual categories is open to question. For a balanced view of the roles of consensus and confrontation as hermeneutical tools for understanding past and present church life, see Clyde L. Manschreck's "Absolutism and Consensus: An Overview of Church History," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, LIX:4 (May 1969), 40-46.

<sup>5</sup>For a detailed statement of the assumptions, design, and appraisal of the summer training for staff members in Project Understanding see "Project Understanding II: Evaluation of Summer Training," (Los Angeles: COMMIT Training Center), pp. 1-10. The training model utilized by COMMIT is strongly influenced by the major tenets of organization development so closely associated with Warren G. Bennis.

of the staff members themselves. Early in the training process they were portrayed as "willing for others to define the issues for them and for others to tell them the appropriate strategies for change."<sup>6</sup> Such dependency, not completely overcome in the training period, resulted in their assuming a cautious spirit in risk taking matters.<sup>7</sup> The fifth factor, one that may undergird the other four, is a self-imposed lull by the nation's citizens from the hectic tensions over the war in Southeast Asia and the militant rhetoric and actions of disenchanted groupings. This calm, though it be temporary, works against any effort to organize around disruptive energies created by blacks, brown, youth, and/or women. In this milieu a conciliatory tactic holds

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>This assessment concerning the "collegial" spirit of the staff members does not mean that there were no incidences of confrontation demonstrated by them. Such occasions did arise in "prophetic preaching," organized pressures on community leaders, and personal challenges to ministers and laymen.

However, these occasions were exceptional despite a somewhat aggressive statement contained in a theological paper written collectively by the staff members. "It is then the task of the change agent to be constantly challenging our a priori world. He is the prophet in the temple smashing idols, breaking the chains that bind us. This means, in practice, exposing people to that which conflicts with their assumptions about the world in the most graphic way possible so they can no longer live with the old realities. The change agent functions as a disturber of a society, always holding up the possibility of what it can become in light of what it is. In this process comes pain and conflict, without which change cannot take place. Thus, at the same time the change agent is creating conflict, he assists in a supportive way, helping bear the pain so that change takes place that is open and receptive to new situations." See "Project Understanding II: Social Goals," (Los Angeles: COMMIT Training Center), p. 8. From this observer's perspective, far more energy was spent in supportive functions than in prophetic ones. In this sense the claim to be prophets is rhetorical.

more promise than does an abrasive one. How well this collaborative approach fared will become more evident as the occasions revealing the conditions for conflict are examined.

#### Entrance into the Ecclesiastical System: Contracting

As the staff members arrived at their respective locales in mid-September, they encountered certain issues left unresolved in the contracting period. Consequently, a large amount of energy and time was consumed to clarify what supposedly had been carried out by the negotiating parties. Those staff members who had less experience in transactional matters were particularly baffled by the distance between the expectations and performances of prior agreements. The more mature ones set in motion processes for re-negotiation. All concurred that the laissez-faire approach had placed them immediately into the arena of interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

Before the specific incidences of conflict are outlined, it should be noted that the enlistment of churches or clusters of churches wherein the models and strategies of the project could be tested was a difficult task. On the one hand certain standards for participation excluded some ecclesiastical institutions from qualifying as sponsoring bodies.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand parish and ecumenical leaders were hesitant

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<sup>8</sup>Listed as the official criteria used in selection of churches and clusters were these: "1) Location in a predominantly white community, 2) Predominantly white membership, 3) Ecumenical spread, 4) Size of staff, 5) Demonstrated interest in the Project by the staff, 6) Financial support (\$2,000)." The one church not meeting the criteria this year was the Temple City Christian Church which was manned by a

to engage themselves in social change. An even greater weariness with racial controversies was aired by denominational personnel. Many churchmen have been continuously involved in combatting racism since the mid-1960's when the repeal of Proposition Fourteen, the state's Fair Housing Law, was initiated.

Once a church or cluster could be stimulated to make an official application, it was difficult to reject its request. As a result, at least two of the approved clusters proved to be unprepared to meet all of the commitments guaranteed by a sponsoring agency. It now appears that neither one of the San Fernando Valley Clusters possessed a major concern for working directly on racism. In the San Fernando East Cluster the staff interns were invited primarily to undergird the fledgling coalition of five parishes. Upon their arrival the staff members were introduced as youth specialists who were trained to supervise the ecumenical youth center managed by the newly formed cluster.

A somewhat parallel situation existed in the opposite end of the "Valley" where the contracting agency, Valley Interfaith Council, had undertaken a thorough re-examination of its own purposes and structures. Further instability in VIC was created when its energetic chairman withdrew his active leadership. Since he had served as the principal representative for VIC in the negotiating period, his

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single minister's staff. It is the judgment of this researcher that the project in Temple City was not adversely affected by this factor. On the contrary the one pastor provided strong support for the seminarians without any loss of self identity or any feeling of being overwhelmed by the presence of two staff members. "Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I," pp. 3-4.



departure contributed to the confusion regarding commitments that were originally made. The assignment of three staff members to the two clusters in the "Valley" further stirred ill feelings. This decision proved to be a poor one since the middle-man struggled for a number of weeks to build a job description that would receive approval from representatives of each cluster.

Whereas the other three projects did not experience particular tensions traceable to the survival needs of the sponsoring body, they did encounter problems associated with misunderstandings around the contracting arrangements. Problems that appeared in more than one locale were the following ones: 1) the different perspectives of the project's purposes held by administrators, staff members, and clergymen-laity, 2) the role and status of "seminary interns" within ecumenical council staffs and/or local congregations, 3) the uncertainty of ministerial support for the project's objectives, 4) the authority and status of local coordinators chosen by the project director, 5) the entrance and responsibility of staff members in each location during the summer months, 6) the formation and agenda of steering committees prior to the residency of the staff members and 7) the administration of the Project Understanding opinion questionnaire.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not

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<sup>9</sup>The listing of these problems in the contracting arrangements confirms that the project administrators were not able to impose some of its recommended proposals upon the contracting parties. For instance the second and third recommendations for Project Understanding II read as follows: "(2) The responsibility of the churches for recruiting laymen and ministers for the Project committee should be emphasized at the start. Stress should be laid upon the necessity for allocation of significant time. (3) The relationship of the interns

these occurrences of conflict can be explained by a single factor is problematic.

What is apparent through the comments made by interviewees is the near absence of the consensus style so highly valued by project personnel. In part its exclusion as an operating strategy during the contracting period is because of the peculiar nature of negotiations that often call for authoritative decisions. In part it can be attributed to the non-negotiable guidelines worked out with the representatives of the funding institution of the project, the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation. Nevertheless, the persons interviewed strongly concurred that a consensus approach would not only have reduced the number of conflicts but also would have enhanced local ownership in the project. Respondents were equally confident that the employment of procedures to insure the broad participation of clergy, laity, staff interns, and project staff during the contract period would have served as a model for a well functioning steering committee. It was also felt that more frequent access to project staff would have increased the possibilities of their being invited to intervene when contract agreements broke down.

Thus, in the light of the data and comments supplied by interviewees regarding the contracting arrangements the *first* and *second* conditions for conflict may be stated as follows:

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to the local committee should be clarified at the earliest possible point." *Ibid.*, p. 28.

*Conflict occurs when differences arise over the expectations and performances of contract agreements.*

*Conflict arises when persons are not involved in the decision making processes that affect their roles and statuses.*<sup>10</sup>

#### Establishment of Group Objectives: Goal Setting

A second occasion under which conflict was evoked in the project occurred around the goal setting processes. Because of the unique contextual situation of every project, no two steering committees worked under the same time line for goal projections. One project that chose their specific change objectives prematurely was San Diego. Motivated by a stimulating weekend in the black and brown ghettos and a provocative seminar in white awareness, the members of the steering committee optioned in early November for the following four objectives:

- 1) to affect fifty job placements for 'minorities' 2) to make it possible for twenty-five 'minority' families to move into the Heartland 3) to impact the educational system causing it to deal constructively with racism and 4) to find ways of correcting institutional racism within the denominational church as well as the local church.<sup>11</sup>

The scope of the objectives proved to be unrealistic in lieu

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<sup>10</sup>The recognition of conflict emerging out of unresolved questions over a person's or a group's authority and role is reminiscent of Dahrendorf's thesis about the nature of conflict. However, his proposal was made within a larger societal context where the strain around the formation and containment of classes was stressed far greater than were the tensions associated with a small group or institution.

<sup>11</sup>"United Project Understanding, San Diego," (La Mesa, CA.: United Project Understanding), p. 3.

of the volunteer composition of the group and the slow pace of affecting institutional policies and structures. Working under the weight of a moral obligation to fulfill these objectives, interviewees reported both intrapersonal and interpersonal strain. Had more time been allotted for formation of group identity as well as a thorough analysis of the institutional racism in the community, more attainable goals might have been selected. Or, had honest feelings been expressed in the steering committee session, re-negotiation of the objectives might have ensued.

The opposite situation developed in the San Fernando West project where the goals were never carefully defined. Not surprisingly, the seventeen respondents in the interview sessions enumerated nineteen different goals. They ranged in interest from identifying and recruiting people who shared similar social concerns, to making institutional changes in order to eliminate racism in the church, to organizing two or three cluster organizations to deal with social changes, to altering individual attitudes and behavior. The inability to reach a tentative consensus around a single objective is linked closely to the project's failure to establish procedures for decision making. The latter is directly attributable to an unresolved conflict between the steering committee chairman and the staff members.

The steering committee in Temple City followed most closely the schedule proposed by the COMMIT staff for goal setting.<sup>12</sup> Only

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<sup>12</sup>The ten steps utilized by COMMIT personnel to move from team building to social action are as follows in condensed form: 1) recruit

after extensive team building exercises and detailed study of systemic racism within the community did they reach a consensus about their specific objective, open housing. To be sure, not all were pleased by the deliberate pace. Several members of the committee desired to move directly into the action phases and, consequently, expressed resentment toward those needing more time to endorse a particular issue.

Whereas most interviewees were able to designate the major goal of Project Understanding to be the alleviation of racism (negatively stated) or to increase the power of new white consciousness in societal changes (positively stated), they differed greatly over the specific target to be impacted. One continuum covered a span from personal changes in attitudes to the reversal of institutional policies. This distinction reflects a difference in the basic assumption of how racism is eliminated or checked. While some believe that changes in individual attitudes lead to shifts in community structures, others are just as convinced that attitudes are molded by modifications of systemic practice in education, private and public housing, social welfare, employment, and the legal processes. Whenever a steering committee was unable to bridge this gap by formulating pluralistic

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2) contact 3) group process task 4) issue analysis 5) issue decision 6) system analysis 7) goal setting 8) strategizing 9) implementation and 10) evaluation. These steps were articulated by the Director of Theological Training of the COMMIT staff, Mr. Paul Kittlaus, in a project consultation session at Sun Valley, California, on February 16, 1971. It is interesting to note that the social goals statement previously alluded to was drafted late in the interns' training period.

objectives, a marked reduction in commitment by certain participants could be noted.

A second continuum that can be discerned from the interviewees' responses regarding the adoption of goals was the ranking of persons and groups who needed to have their racial attitudes altered. Mentioned in different priority listings were steering committee members, clergymen, lay leadership in congregations, members of parishes, and citizens of the community. The readiness of many steering committee members to shift beyond themselves to other individuals or groupings as the subjects for racism is itself highly significant. Usually this hesitancy of white committee members to see themselves as the problem resulted in their assuming ill conceived goals as well as their suppressing anxiety, fear, and guilt around racism. Quite often the latter reappeared in disguised forms of anger, aggression and resentment. When this occurred, as it did in the San Fernando East cluster and Temple City locale, group life was disrupted.

Where there was a black person present either as a staff intern, a committee member, or as a resource person, individual racism was more likely to be faced openly. In San Diego where a staff member was black, committee members signified that his presence caused them to confront their own racism as they adopted and implemented their goals.<sup>13</sup> Pasadena respondents likewise acknowledged that the most

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<sup>13</sup>These new perceptions into white racism created tension between committee members and their families and vocational peers. Several members spoke of being charged as being fanatics or radicals when they exposed racist attitudes and structures in daily life.

dramatic stirring around personal and institutional racism happened when blacks were present to challenge whites.

The model most frequently used to expose the racism of liberals as well as conservatives has been the "new white consciousness" design. After being personally demonstrated in late August by its architects, Robert Terry and Douglas Fitch, the proposal was enthusiastically added to the staff members' portfolios.<sup>14</sup> The basic assumption underlying the model is that racial unrest has its root cause in white attitudes and white-controlled institutions. A secondary assumption is that man will act upon his racism. It's being used as it was in San Diego, where the participants were encouraged to organize around their self interests, raises certain kinds of questions about the model's limitations. Can you really build a model for dealing with racism around the self interests of whites who are rewarded by the present system? If so, does the model provide either the insights or the power to alleviate the hard core racism embedded in organizations? In contrast, where the model was employed as a catalytic instrument for goal setting, as it was in Pasadena and Temple City, it becomes a viable strategy.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of the forgoing findings and evaluations in the

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<sup>14</sup>For an overview of the "new white consciousness" model see Robert W. Terry, *For Whites Only* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

<sup>15</sup>Even where the "new white consciousness" model was so used in Temple City and Pasadena, both teams experienced difficulty in moving from goal setting to goal attainment. Apparently what happened was that the energy generated by Terry's and Fitch's design was lost in the movement to the action phase. This phenomenon may not be due so much to nature of the model as it is to the inadequate training given to staff members to make a transition from group maintenance to group task.

goal setting process the *third* and *fourth* conditions for conflicts may be cited as follows:

*Conflict takes place when premature decisions about goals and objectives are made.*

*Conflict happens when a group fails to establish procedures for decision making and goal setting.*<sup>16</sup>

#### Leadership of Change Agents: Personalities and Skills

The third context in which conflict occurred in the project revolved around the personalities and skills of the staff members. Noted briefly above was the interplay between the presence of a black staff member and the agenda of a steering committee. While this example has a peculiar character of its own, it does point to the integrative relationship of personalities in conflict situations. James Coleman, an American sociologist, has been able to trace the inherent tendency of conflict situations to shift from substantive issues to personalities. It is his thesis that disagreement over a minor topic can provide the impetus whereby suppressed feelings rise to the surface. In the process the original cause of discord is forgotten in lieu of the sole interest to attack the character of one's opponent.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Other learnings about the nature of conflict derived from the material gathered under the category of goal setting are these two. First, conflict is intensified when ideals and issues highly valued by the participants are at stake. Second, should the conflict around highly regarded values or issues be suppressed, they ordinarily reappear in a far more disruptive fashion.

<sup>17</sup>James S. Coleman, *Community Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1957), p. 11. Coleman's findings regarding the continuum from issues to personalities was cited in a different context earlier in the dissertation. See page 41.



The reasons for this kind of behavior are not entirely known, although two factors are ordinarily present. The obvious personality flaws that provide convenient handles for opponents to grasp is the first, while the second one is the expression of accumulated enmities and frustrations through the guise of another issue. Lewis Coser labeled the latter factor as "unrealistic conflict."<sup>18</sup>

These two factors were at play in a conflict situation in the San Fernando East project. What started as the unwillingness of a lay member to face her own racism developed into charges against one of the staff members for conduct unbecoming an ordained minister. As the level of conflict intensified, the staff member retaliated by employing what he himself describes as a "humor that puts people down." Offended by the intern's taunting, the lay participant singled out the staff member for continuous criticism. Upon inquiry with her priest and parish associates this researcher discovered that the hostility of the lay woman was not uncommon. Whenever she could not cope with objective or realistic issues, she transferred her ill feelings upon other persons.

When the personality of the staff member was less assertive, the possibilities for conflict were decreased. A graphic example of this judgment came in the San Fernando West locale where an unusually close relationship existed between a conciliatory-natured intern and several members of the steering committee. This intimate association

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<sup>18</sup>See pages 22-23.

was alluded to several times during the interview sessions with the seventeen respondents. Those persons belonging to this "in-group" spoke of one another on a first name basis and shared confidential information about one another. In time the staff member and his wife were brought into this "family" where they took upon the roles of students-in-residence. When the persons who participated in this circle of mutual care and support were asked to cite incidences of conflict, they found it difficult to do so. Upon being questioned to explain why there had been a near absence of conflict in the steering committee, one interviewee offered this explanation: "Because of our closeness we have a tendency to suppress conflict, or to sit on it."<sup>19</sup>

This description supports the distinction made by Coser between closely knit groups and segmental groups. It was his thesis that the persons who belong to closely knit groups are reluctant to reveal in speech and behavior deep feelings such as anger, frustration and hostility despite the numerous occasions for personal interaction.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, persons participating in segmental groupings invest only a

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<sup>19</sup>It should not be construed that the absence or near absence of conflict in the "West Valley" project is solely attributable to the closeness of the key actors in the Valley Interfaith Council. Persons interviewed in this locale were able to list several other factors for this phenomenon. Among those frequently mentioned were 1) the tenuous position of VIC that dictated a cautious entry into controversial issues 2) low priority given to Project Understanding by overworked members of VIC 3) conscious avoidance of racial issues due to weariness of persons involved in the "proposition fourteen affair," 4) the earthquake event that pre-empted the project's time line and 5) the congenial personalities of the staff members.

<sup>20</sup>What did not occur in this situation, as Coser believed it would, is the eruption of repressed feelings. See page 26.

part of their time and energy in any one group. Since they take part in a variety of associations that together give meaning and direction in life, they are more free to engage in conflict and to risk rejection.

However, the data from the other four locations suggest that Coser's theory about closely knit groups being unable to entertain conflict is not substantiated. For instance, in Temple City where the members developed close bonds of friendship, multiple occasions of conflict within their steering committee sessions were reported. An explanation for this phenomenon does not lie so much with the unique type of groupings in the project as it does with Coser's horizontal perspective. He sees social conflict almost exclusively in terms of interpersonal and intergroup disassociation. Consequently, he fails to take account of the psychological forces within an individual or a group of individuals experiencing conflict. It is my contention that without this perspective of depth one loses an essential dimension in the study and utilization of conflict present in every pluralistic situation. Goals, values, motives, instincts and needs do vie with one another and do sometimes get suppressed.

Quite fortunately the COMMIT staff who trained the nine interns saw the importance of intragroup dynamics in handling conflict.<sup>21</sup> Such attention to group process work resulted in the interviewees' seeing this skill to be the strongest possessed by staff interns.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>"Project Understanding II: Evaluation of Summer Training."

<sup>22</sup>The ranking of other skills manifested by the staff interns among steering committee members were problem solving, resources in

Accordingly, the staff members understood their principal roles to be facilitators and trainers. As facilitators they tried to observe intragroup relationships, to diagnose the group's needs, and to identify relevant resources. As trainers they attempted to introduce new knowledge prior to the time that the group members or practioners entered the goal setting and goal achievement stages.

In Pasadena it was learned that neither one of these two roles empowered the staff interns to lead committee members to challenge the deep rooted racism existent in the institutional structures of the community. If these structures were to be penetrated and/or altered, other roles needed to be assumed. The critical decision of whether to adopt a more "political" role came in October when the community faced a recall election of liberal-moderate school board members. This particular election had racial overtones. The Pasadena school board members had just implemented an unpopular court order to establish racially integrated schools through the busing of students. For several days the staff members were indecisive about what role to assume. Should they continue to be facilitators for the committee or should they become organizers? Four interviewees and two project consultants signified that conflict was generated among committee members when it appeared that the staff interns were uncertain about which role to adopt.

Another occasion for the emergence of conflict around the conceived roles of staff members took place in the "East Valley." Both staff members arrived prepared to act as leaders and trainers for a

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racism (definitions, readings, games), and community organizing.

middle class clientele. After a series of rejections, the interns requested consultative sessions with representatives of Project Understanding and local pastors. These persons jointly concurred that a major reason for the project's inertia could be attributed to a misreading of the local constituency. What was needed were models and techniques to impact a working class culture where the people's lives are governed by practical realities of daily routine rather than by altruistic values. A consensus was reached by the participants that the staff members needed to assume an organizing role with blue collar workers. Such a role could immediately be assumed by the staff members around the expressed anger of blue collar constituents to the opinion questionnaire administered in the cluster's five parishes. Two strategic purposes would be served in the process. First, important learnings about the perceptions of the laboring class as to what "white racism" looks like could be obtained. Second, the staff members and ministers could achieve badly needed creditability with blue collar workers by being identified as organizers against the "white collar racists." The staff members first hesitated and then finally refused to take up this role. In turn, resident pastors and laymen expressed resentment and frustration. The pastors believed that the staff members had vacated their roles as organizers of blue collar personnel. The laymen dismissed them as another team of outsiders or middle class liberals.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>The effort to establish guidelines for a coalition between blue collar workers and racial minorities is fraught with problems.

As a consequence of these two conflict situations around role perceptions the *fifth* and *sixth* conditions for conflict may be stated thusly:

*Conflict takes place when the change agent vacillates between contradictory roles of leadership.*

*Conflict occurs when the change agent is required by the situation to assume a different role than the one for which he has been trained.<sup>24</sup>*

### The Development of Group Life: Team Building

Already observed have been several instances where steering committee members experienced conflict around questions of contract, goals, and leadership of staff members. Now I want to examine incidences of conflict that occurred when committee members worked together on issues of group maintenance and group action. The hardest adjustment that committee members had to make was the transition from an authoritarian style to a democratic one. For a few who had previously been exposed to a consensus approach, the shift only entailed the learning of a new vocabulary. For most it meant a readjustment from

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From the perspective of the working class blacks and browns are extended favoritism in special education and employment opportunities after rioting in the cities. In so doing the highly respected "American ideals" of law and order are flaunted as well as the job security of thousands of union employees is threatened.

<sup>24</sup> Another learning about the nature of conflict that can be inferred from the incidences described in this section under the personalities and skills of staff members is that personality-centered conflict requires a different kind of expertise on the part of the change agent than does issue-centered conflict. As one means of contrasting the competence needed in each sphere, the former type calls for proficiency in group process work while the latter entails organizational leadership in problem solving and task achievement.

being passive observers to becoming active participants.

Nowhere was this change more difficult than it was in the East San Fernando Valley locale. After providing direct leadership in cultivating the awareness and skills of potential members for two months, the staff members announced that their roles henceforth would be confined to organizing, consulting, and training. Underlying this decision was the assumption that ownership in the project is not achievable until the members invest their time and efforts to build a plan for action taking.

With the exception of one or two persons, the committee members were first stunned, and then angered, by the decision. Three members of the Roman Catholic Church were especially disturbed by the efforts of the ordained staff to relinquish their authority. All three commented that they had no experience with church related organizations where action was taken without either the presence or approval of the priest. Their committee assignment had come from the senior priest and they would honor his expectations for their consultation about conclusions reached in the project.

The "East Valley" was not the only locale where clergymen expected laymen to brief them concerning project matters. In Pasadena the six senior pastors moved a step further by supporting a resolution that no action should be taken by the steering committee without final approval from the parishes' governing boards. Under this kind of pastoral pressure the steering committee decided to permit each congregation to design its own proposal for handling racism.

When it became apparent that committee members would not be empowered to resolve any fundamental issues placed before them, some of them expressed anger, frustration, and/or disappointment. Others chose to exert little or no effort to a project in which they could take no responsibility for its maintenance or action. As a result of these reactions committee sessions tended to become occasions for training members or for reporting programming in each of the congregational units.

This ever present danger of co-optation was avoided in Temple City where a different structural relationship existed with the sponsoring church. Here the project was financed through individual pledges rather than through the church's budget. In turn the parish's administrative board held no veto power over the project's activities. If it disagreed with its objectives or methodologies, it could only withhold its endorsement. A secondary fact in protecting the committee's autonomy was an unwritten policy honored in denominations having their origin in "free church" traditions. In these polities each grouping in the corporate body is given as much independence as possible.

While Temple City's steering committee did not experience intragroup conflict around questions of its sovereignty, it did encounter a series of conflicts as it moved from the training phase to the action phase. Some members argued vehemently that the group was not prepared to assume a specific task. Others pushed for the selection of action goals and appropriate strategies for their achievement. This



impasse was resolved when a decision was made to search for a specific objective and to train solely within the context of this search. Once the objective was designated, another kind of conflict appeared. The necessary energies now being extended to task accomplishment were usurping the committee's need for interpersonal communication. Several persons reported a loss of group cohesiveness as they submerged themselves in task functions. Still another type of conflict arose when the decision was made to enlist additional personnel to man the task forces. The once small, intimate group with a common history was now enlarging to become what appeared to be an impersonal agency with different concerns and procedures.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in the three situations of team building described in this section the *seventh*, *eighth*, and *ninth* conditions for precipitating conflict can be delineated:

*Conflict takes place when the group adopts a different decision making process than the one to which it has been accustomed.*

*Conflict occurs when the decision making body does not possess sufficient autonomy to determine its own objectives and strategies.*

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<sup>25</sup>The difficulty that the Temple City team experienced in moving from group maintenance to group action is one that occurred in the project last year. "Instead of appropriating group process as a model for facilitating change, the interns began to form themselves into a group and engaged in group process. This produced problems later in planning and implementing the interns' meetings and it also skewed the first few months of the Project Understanding process in the local churches." "Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I," p. 25. It is believed that the reason for this inertia is due to the training the interns received in extensive group development at the expense of strategies for changing institutions and systems. It is the judgment of this researcher that this problem was not alleviated in this year's training.

*Conflict is created when the decision making body moves from group maintenance functions to group action functions.*

### Intervention into Congregational Life: Data Collection

The penetration of the project into sponsoring congregations became the fifth setting where conflict can be discerned. Sermonic presentations, seminars with laymen and youth, wavering ministerial support, and uncertainty over financial contributions were cited as occasions for stress and strain inside parishes. Yet, none of these incidences provoked nearly as much controversy as did the opinion questionnaire distributed in the worship services and fellowship gatherings.<sup>26</sup> A few pastors believed that its distribution was a deliberate attempt to increase the level of tension in their congregations.<sup>27</sup> Blacks and browns were offended because the survey's questions were designed for a white audience. Others reported that it was too lengthy and overly-repetitive. Still others felt its employment

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<sup>26</sup> Exactly one-half of the interviewees in the four locales where the questionnaire was administered reported strife and tension around its giving.

<sup>27</sup> Charles L. Dailey of Dartmouth College has articulated five means for inducing conflict or increasing the level of conflict. They are as follows: 1) Test Planning: begin a process of planning, with inclusion of long range, intermediate range, and short range goal setting, 2) Depth interviewing: ascertain what individuals think and feel, 3) Polling: survey the members of an organization, 4) Representative Organization: begin an analysis of representation on boards, with special interest in identifying groupings that have been systematically excluded and 5) Social Indicators: institute a process of defining the barometers of health in the institutional body. Charles L. Dailey, "The Management of Conflict," *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, LIX:4 (May 1969), 3.

in worship services violated their expectations for a traditional liturgy. In contrast, some interviewees appreciated the opportunity to register their opinions about racism and were eager to know whether changes would be verified when the second questionnaire was taken.

The questionnaire brought to the surface some of the latent issues and controversies that are deeply ingrained in the "institutional psyche" of American churches. In this sense the dissension surrounding the opinion survey is an epitome of the internal crisis of the polarized church. Lee and Galloway have described the split between church-oriented Christians and world-oriented Christians as follows:

One faction seeks to relate to the world and is intent upon coping with community conflict and social change. The other side of the polarity seeks to 'let the church be the church' in its attention to worship, prayer, and devotional life, and thus provide comfort and joy and solace to Christian lives.<sup>28</sup>

Besides the exposure of the dichotomy between "pietistic" and "secularized" churchmen, the flack around the questionnaire aroused repressed feelings of hostility and resentment toward the interns who represented the activists of the student generation. At stake was the credibility of young adults as confronters to older adults. Beneath the polite silence was a contempt for seminarians whose mod dress, long hair style, and abrasive language portrayed youth in revolt against society.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Lee and Russell Galloway, *The Schizophrenic Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> This situation illustrates again Coser's delineation of non-

When the staff members attempted to examine with pastors the learnings that could be gleaned from the expressed negativisms around the opinion survey, they were met with a large amount of apprehension. Most ministers were unprepared to deal either with the "realistic" or "unrealistic" dimensions of conflict which the questionnaire's administration prompted. Furthermore, they were frightened by their new awareness of the depth and breadth of racism among their parishioners that had been exposed publicly in their congregational meetings. As long as the conflict emerging from opinion polls and parish surveys was confined to the privacy of members' homes, the pastors did not have to face such ill feelings. Most clergymen decided that the risk of institutional disruption and threatened shrinkage in membership and income was too great for a program that might be folding after the exit of staff members in the late spring.<sup>30</sup> It was their judgment that it was preferable to block or postpone the questionnaire than to use it as an organizing event for change. Thus, the *tenth* condition in which conflict appeared in the project can be stated as follows:

*Conflict is induced when the normal patterns of congregational life are interrupted by evaluative processes.*

While there were a few occasions of conflict within the communities where the projects were located, no attempt will be made to

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realistic conflict. See p. 83 and pp. 22-23.

<sup>30</sup>This concern of continuation after the interns' leave taking was mentioned by several respondents. It should be noted that extensive efforts were made by the project administration to sell the project as a three-year package. See "Evaluation Report: Project Understanding I," p. 27.

formulate tentative assessments about them. The available data is sparse since the citizens in the communities affected by the project's entrance were not interviewed. Nor was this researcher always present to observe these disruptive events as they unfolded. What can be documented and analyzed are the techniques employed by project personnel in the conflict situations within the communities and congregations. To these techniques I now turn.

#### Guidelines for the Adoption of Techniques for Conflict Management

Before the techniques employed by the project's personnel to manage conflict are delineated, it is helpful to review briefly the basic guidelines that influence their selection and development. All of them are closely identified to the consensus approach noted in the introductory remarks of this chapter. In the interns' training this past summer and in their consultations during the year stress was placed upon the need to organize around commonalities that emerge when people work together. In these interactions men can arrive at agreements about the definition of a problem or a need, the goals to be achieved, and the strategies for realizing them.

In this environment conflict is neither to be avoided or permitted to become violent. Rather, it is to be confronted in its earliest form. Kenneth E. Boulding argues for the early recognition of conflict thusly:

The biggest problem in developing institutions of conflict control is that of catching them when they are young. Conflict situations are frequently allowed to develop to almost

unmanageable proportions before anything is done about them, by which time it is often too late to resolve them by peaceable or procedural means.<sup>31</sup>

Once the locus of conflict has been pinpointed, preferably when it is *young*, every effort is made to bring the opponent into dialogue so that a wider circle of relationship can be formulated. Through *communication* with the opposing party clarity is gained about one another's cognitive and emotive positions. It is believed that open, honest confrontation increases the trust level among the parties involved, helps them to assume a new group consciousness, enables them to arrive at common conclusions or acceptable compromises, and moves them into joint action.

Furthermore, the parties assuming the consensus approach to conflict attempt to distinguish the *real sources* of conflict from the unreal. In so doing they try to remove as much distortion as possible or else try to keep the distortion to a minimal level. They also strive to encourage the *ventilation of hostility* by all parties. If abuse has occurred, the correction or adjustments can be made. Finally in the consensus approach every effort is made to keep conflict within some kind of *order* either by channeling it into existing structures or by creating new structures for its containment.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 325.

<sup>32</sup>For an elaboration of this condensation of consensus strategies see Tex S. Sample's "Consensus and Conflict Strategies: Their Implications for the League of Women Voters in Working with Powerless Groups in American Society," unpublished material, for private distribution only.

### Techniques for the Management of Conflict

In every locale except the "West Valley" special efforts were made to help steering committee members to anticipate individual and group reactions in controversial situations. Several modifications of inductive learning were employed by the staff members to develop these personal skills and group resources. In Temple City a variation of an *action-reflection* approach was used. Conflict experiences arising from the members' interaction with one another over the adoption of an action goal were utilized for reflective analysis. Through the group's support one could measure his sensitivity and flexibility to lively differences arising around the selection of a goal. Amid trusted peers one could also receive accurate feedback regarding his role in conflict.

In Pasadena an articulate black from greater Los Angeles was invited as the catalyst for a steering committee session. His confrontational style invoked hostility and anger from some of the committee members. Others were moved to take seriously his challenge for the development of a new white consciousness based on enlightened self interest and a positive appreciation of the possibility of liberation of whites as well as blacks. After his exit the group reviewed their reactions to his militant presentation. More important, several members stayed late to compare one another's responses in the heated debate and to ascertain what kinds of learnings emerged that could be appropriated in future *black-white encounters*.

*Simulated exercises* helped project personnel in Pasadena,

San Fernando East, and San Diego to enhance their competence in conflict situations. In Pasadena the two staff members were invited to serve as trainers for a group of middle class blacks and whites who volunteered their services in a parish sponsored, low-rent housing project. Until the training session the volunteers' tasks were largely confined to social services such as child care, recreation, and transportation. Tensions mounted in the training session when the resident program director "requested" that the volunteers give formal support to the organizing of a tenement group. As a means to enable the volunteers to understand the need for residents to empower themselves, the staff members initiated a series of *role playing* episodes where the volunteers took roles as residents and organizers. Within a few days the chairman of the volunteers announced congregational endorsement for the organizing activities.

Staff members in San Diego and San Fernando East utilized a variety of *games* to simulate disruptive tactics between the powerful and powerless in urban settings. Role identifications were experienced with such diverse groupings as slum dwellers, agitators, governmental officials, and business executives. Following the playing of these games a debriefing period helped to surface different levels of conflict at work in authority relationships and power interests pertinent to committee members.

Whether or not these types of inductive learning devised for optimum uses of conflict were appropriated is not easily discernible. One locale that does lend itself to such assessment is San



Diego.<sup>33</sup> Within the first six months two racial incidents in the community took place that served to test the preparation of a cadre of persons ready to act in crisis. The first situation was incited by a La Mesa policeman for a remark made during an anti-shoplifting clinic in mid-November. He told merchants during the clinic sponsored by the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce that they should watch blacks more closely than whites as shoplifting suspects.<sup>34</sup>

Responses by committee members came quickly in the form of personal letters and telephone calls to the Chamber of Commerce and the Police Department and public letters to the local newspapers. Statements indicating the issues at stake and possible alternative actions were read in three of the four churches the following Sunday. Both staff members served as mediators between angry blacks and frightened whites during the height of the controversy. As a result of these kinds of action three representatives from the steering committee were placed on the newly formed human relations committee of the Chamber of Commerce. City councilmen likewise established a human relations council. The officer who made the accusation was suspended for three days and transferred from the department's investigation division to the business office. Nine other officers were immediately

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<sup>33</sup>Other training experiences in conflict management also contributed to the preparation of steering committee members in San Diego. Already noted on page 81 was the employment of the new white consciousness model. Another technique employed by the staff members was the exposure weekend. A description of this technique is forthcoming in this chapter. See page 102.

<sup>34</sup>"News Item," *Los Angeles Times* (December 11, 1970), 2.

scheduled for special training in human relations.

The second incident revolved around a racial fracas at the conclusion of a C.I.F. basketball playoff game between the all white Grossmont High School in La Mesa and the all black Lincoln High School in San Diego. Supporters from both high schools were further incensed the next day by an inflammatory article in the city's leading newspaper. In response steering committee members pressed the Grossmont administration to move beyond the placement of blame on the black students to the formation of a conciliatory committee. This committee was able to draw up new policies for interscholastic events between the two schools. One steering committee member, an art teacher at Lincoln, helped facilitate communication between the two administrations when the tension was at its height. Another committee member organized Grossmont students and faculty members to deal directly with the racial connotations by issuing personal statements for public reading. When these testaments were presented to the San Diego newspaper editor as evidence of pluralistic feelings in the Grossmont area, he publicly admitted prejudicial reporting and promised a changed policy for future coverage of black-white affairs.

While the San Diego steering committee clearly demonstrated their readiness to intervene in conflict situations and to redirect the dynamics of the situations in a constructive way, their efforts were not duplicated by other steering committees. However, this judgment does not mean that other steering committees were unable to develop appropriate means to deal with conflict according to their

particular settings. A number of endeavors to institutionalize conflict were undertaken. Various structures were either adapted or created for the expression of opposing points of view and for the distribution and redistribution of authority.

In the Neighborhood Unitarian Church in Pasadena periodically scheduled *forums* allow complaints and controversies to be ventilated near the time that they occur. Ordinarily the precipitators of the tension and their antagonists are present to engage in a dialectic exchange. Members of the congregation have found that this formal time for differences to be aired lessens the danger of accumulated hostilities. At the same time members acquire valuable insights into handling conflict that can be applied in disruptive situations at work, at home, or in community organizations. Hence, when the local project committee chose to expose racism through plays and films presented in congregational gatherings, the forum provided a setting where positive and negative reactions could be identified and directed toward constructive outlets.

When the steering committee in Temple City encountered resistance from some of its members regarding the chosen action goal, open housing, the staff members decided to form three *task forces*. Those who were highly committed to the project's goal were placed on the implementation and educational task forces. In turn the antagonistic and hesitant members were assigned to the data task force. Two assumptions prompted this decision. First, the collectors of data would be placed less frequently into potentially hostile situations where their

own reservations might be reconfirmed. Second, they would be less likely to refute data garnered by themselves. Only when communications weakened and lines of accountability broke, did the data task force need to be reverted into the educational and implementation units. Nevertheless, the original strategy had worked to the degree that some attitudes were changed without any resignations occurring.

The "East Valley" staff members chose an *exposure weekend* as the means to surface intragroup conflict as well as to organize the action phase of the project. The designated target for the plunge experience was nearby Pacoima where a black ghetto is in its formative stages. Personal dialogues with welfare recipients, presentations by governmental representatives in housing and employment, visits with members of store-front churches before and after worship services, and conversations with consumers and owners in neighborhood markets constituted the agenda for the weekend. Each of these experiences was followed by a debriefing session and group evaluation. When the group reconvened the next week, several of the previously silent and resentful members were willing to discuss their personal frustrations more openly.

In addition to the development of personal skills and group resources and the establishment of institutional structures for conflict management, staff teams relied upon co-optation as a third means to prevent polarization among dissonant factions. This strategy is designed to develop an interdependence among opposing parties by deliberately appointing antagonists to the same committee. Within this

small grouping continuous expressions of grievances can ensue and a middle ground for action can be formulated. Lee and Galloway believe the employment of co-optation performs these dual functions.

First, it insures that the various wings of the congregation will exercise a critical and challenging influence on each other. Conservatives may challenge liberals to be authentically and effectively liberal, and liberals may similarly demand genuine action rather than evasion from their conservative brethren. Second, co-optation functions to keep controversy in the open so that it will not go under the surface into clandestine interest groups.<sup>35</sup>

One usage of co-optation emerged out of the conflict around the administration of the opinion questionnaire. Whereas the other teams did not try to organize around the flack of the survey, the staff members in Temple City in conjunction with the senior pastor decided to devise a way to cope with the surfaced ill feelings. Since the root of the dissatisfaction seemed to be attributable to the unclarity over the church's mission, a proposal for a congregation-wide "goals project" was made. Most of the work took place in small dialogue sessions within parishioners' homes. The leaders of these groupings were carefully chosen and trained. Special attention was given in the training period to the areas of goal setting, leadership styles, hidden agendas, and non-verbal behavior. Once the leaders were prepared, they received assignment to groupings representing pluralistic positions. Problems were identified and recommendations were made for parish goals. At the close of each dialogue session delegates denoting the various factions were designated to attend a parish congress where

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<sup>35</sup> Lee and Galloway, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

statements of purpose and action goals were forced. Both statements were then ratified during an open congregational meeting.

A second example of the utilization of co-optation took place in San Diego where the black staff member led a group of Methodist laymen through the new white consciousness model. Using a confrontational style of presentation, he accused a lay woman of holding racist attitudes. She immediately retaliated with angry rejoinders. Later her husband and she took their grievances to the members of the project's education task force. After consultation between the staff interns and members of the task force, a plan was devised for the inclusion of the irate couple in outlining the agenda for the remaining sessions. Agreement was reached that less abrasive tactics would be used. As a result of his being incorporated into the decision making process, the husband taught the spring session of the "new white" model in his church.

#### Implications of Findings for the Institutional Church

While the concluding chapter contains a tentative set of hypotheses based primarily on the empirical data formulated in this chapter, two implications of this research for local congregations faced with conflict may be cited now. First, if the church is to be the corporate body of Jesus Christ in a dynamic environment, then it must adopt a congregational style in which its members can work creatively together in spite of their substantial differences. The church can best accomplish this task when it is willing to institutionalize

pluralistic models and strategies for performing its tasks. Just as the project participants were critical of staff members who possessed proficiency in just one model or strategy, so are laymen discouraged with pastors who are attached to a single form of worshipping, teaching, counseling, or witnessing. Crucial to this transition is the professional pastor who needs to be able to unite with his members in creating these models or in adapting existing ones.

Second, structural processes for the exposure and management of conflict need to be developed. With the exception of the Neighborhood Unitarian Church in Pasadena which provided a forum for the airing of differences, none of the other congregations in the project had institutional procedures for handling interpersonal and intergroup conflict. These congregations almost exclusively depend upon their pastor to mediate between quarreling factions. Most pastors neither have the skills nor the time to assume this responsibility. Even if they possessed such expertise, they often would have to disqualify themselves on the grounds of being prejudiced or being a contributing party to the dissension.

There are other alternatives open for congregations that do not want to avoid conflict automatically or suppress conflict as quickly as possible. One alternative is the appointment of an official ombudsman to receive and investigate members' grievances against one another and the pastor. Since he would have to be reimbursed for his time and services, only the largest parishes or a coalition of parishes could financially underwrite such a highly skilled person.

A second alternative is the establishment of a permanent committee charged with the responsibility to provide a setting where adversaries could encounter one another and could express freely the cognitive and emotive differences that they carry. When necessary, committee members could invite skilled personnel to assume appropriate roles as therapists, trainers, facilitators, or mediators.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have sought to create a hermeneutical framework for dealing with conflict in congregational life. Some of the research has been directed toward the exposure and interpretation of three theories of conflict. An effort has been made to examine the theological implications of the images of man assumed by each of three theorists. Pertinent data has been secured from persons involved in Project Understanding as a means to identify a set of conditions in which conflict occurs and to delineate the techniques utilized to cope with these same conflict situations. Throughout the study a basic assumption has been repeatedly confirmed. Local congregations continue to be centers of conflict despite the presence of a large number of pastors and laymen who seek relief from internal and external controversies.

It is quite apparent that more research is required to ascertain how the church can more effectively utilize this turbulent milieu that characterizes its life and witness. It might well be that the local church in turmoil can become the locus where theologians and ethicists reflect upon their experiences with churchmen and then formulate new interpretations of such doctrines as good and evil, sin, eschatology and Christology. In this sense conflict might serve as an interpretative tool for reshaping theology and ethics. Furthermore, the parish might be reclaimed as a reality setting where churchmen can

learn to integrate recent sociological and psychological findings about man with the traditional views of man gleaned from the scriptures and tradition.

Before either one of these provisional proposals can be seriously entertained, marked changes in the attitudes and actions toward conflict will need to be made. A large majority of pastors and laity interviewed this spring are only prepared to adopt consensus tactics in working with conflict. The basic pattern in church reorganization around congregational tension is to use a management consulting style that draws its experience from private corporations where administrative processes dominate. In this context recommendations for change follow the general pattern to centralize authority, to clarify functions, to increase the efficiency of internal processes, to insure flexibility of staff assignments, and to provide more adequate feedback mechanisms related to services provided.

As a consequence, any procedures that are more commonly associated with secular or "worldly" pursuits such as dissent, dissonance, and disruption are opposed as legitimate means whereby persons could make changes in the church's internal structures or could organize to bring pressure upon societal institutions. Resistance to the more coercive-oriented tactics suggests that the parish as a voluntary association will have to undertake a radical reorientation if it is to move beyond the persuasive-oriented approaches normally identified with "churchly" action. Since it is doubtful that it will or can undergird such a transformation, theologians and ethicists concerned

with the full range of conflict theories and strategies will need to choose other arenas such as the ghetto and the university to work on some of their assumptions.

However, the decision to ignore altogether the local congregation as a community of conflict would not deny only the reality of parish life but also it would refute the evidence of contemporary social scientists who perceive conflict as an inevitable fact of man's nature and history. All three of the social theorists chosen for this study believe that conflict is integral to institutional life and can become a dynamic factor for group maintenance and action provided it is properly regulated. Within this interpretation they see conflict as a manifestation of man's finitude rather than of his depravity. In theological terms this perspective infers that conflict is no longer to be viewed as evil per se. In ecclesiastical terms it implies that the collective body of Christ necessarily engages in the stress and strain with the powers of the world as well as with the inequities within its own system. In anthropological terms it suggests that man experiences disharmony within himself and with others who take fellowship with him. Sometimes the tension is so intense that the unity of the personality or the cohesion of the group is destroyed. Yet, it does not follow that personal or corporate health lies in reverse ratio to conflict. To live without conflict is impossible. Indeed, one of the indelible markings of a strong personality or a vigorous institution is the ability to function in conflict and to turn conflict into creativity.

Conflict is more apt to become a creative energy instead of a disintegrative force when it is placed within some kind of procedural process. This judgment is confirmed by churchmen who find themselves involved in a congregational situation where the antinomies of justice and reconciliation, of love and righteousness, of truth and community are rarely balanced. Nor are the same churchmen immune to insisting on their own goodness to the detriment of the good for other members. Given these kinds of learnings about man's nature and his ecclesiastical institutions, the adoption of a strategy of conflict management is more realistic than is one of conflict resolution.

The extent to which the church can incorporate a variety of conflicts into its operating style is primarily dependent upon how churchmen understand their own pluralism. More is required than for them to honor the diversities of mankind in a spirit of catholic unity or to accommodate them in an atmosphere of universal tolerance. They need to have the courage to embrace and handle their controversies so that the multiple dimensions of every conflict situation are confronted and managed. This commitment means that the practice of church discipline is strengthened in order to make clear that catholicity or tolerance is not interpreted as indifferentism or relevantism about the doctrinal and ethical implications of a pluralistic community. It means that those churchmen who differ profoundly, particularly on issues of social and political importance, do communicate with one another as responsible brothers in Christ. It means that churchmen do prepare themselves to convert the energy produced in conflict

situations into valuable insights and constructive behavior.

The leadership of clergymen is crucial for the adoption and maintenance of this conception of congregational life. They will no longer be able to limit their ministerial care to their constituents in a direct, personal way. In addition they will need to devise ways in which they can minister to people institutionally. This proposal is predicated upon the fact that the world in which the pastor and his parishioners live is a world that is highly organized, thoroughly bureaucratic, basically urban, and primarily technical. Increasingly one must relate to human beings through large associations and concentrations of powers in various sectors of society.

In order for the pastor to become an effective change agent in this world of conglomerates he will need to acquire the skills to work not only within but also upon his institutions. Power belongs to institutions rather than to individuals. People may individually have strength but they cannot sufficiently exercise it unless they act in concert with other human beings in such a way that their collective action begins to produce changes in society and in the church. For instance, the pastor who operates within this framework of power alignments recognizes that racist attitudes and actions in individuals are largely shaped by racist structures in our culture. The task before him is to alter these structures so that they no longer perpetuate racism. Since this objective is a formidable one, it entails conscious strategizing inside a supportive community that is willing to take upon the hurt and pain surrounding systemic racism and to act decisively as

a corporate body to alleviate the cause of such suffering.

According to the data gathered from the five locales in Project Understanding such action taking will be impaired whenever possible. Even the steering committee members showed a strong preference to deal with their racist attitudes rather than to implement specific objectives to penetrate systemic racism. They seemed almost instinctively to know that differences over attitudes create less tension than do ones over divisions around task achievements. The conflict further intensified when their own self interests such as job security, property values, and educational standards were threatened.

It is these type of findings that prompt serious questions about the readiness of the contemporary church to deal responsibly with conflict. What are implications for the church when its constituency blocks the implementation of specific action objectives? Should the church confine its objectives to attitudinal changes or should it expand them to include institutional changes? It would appear that the church will have to define for itself whether or not these two objectives are compatible with one another. If they are not, under what conditions is one to be chosen over the other? It would be a valuable service to the church involved in conflict if these kinds of queries could be properly researched.

While this is not the place to set forth either the presuppositions or methodologies for additional study in the nature of conflict and its management in the local congregation, it is possible on the basis of this introductory study to propose a tentative set of

hypotheses for such an undertaking. They are as follows:

1. *In the local church internal cohesiveness is more highly valued than is social change.*
2. *The local congregation is more likely to be receptive to attitudinal changes than either behavioral changes in persons or structural changes in institutions.*
3. *Conflict emerges more sharply in a local congregation when one of the decision making bodies focuses upon an action task than when it addresses a maintenance task.*
4. *Conflict in the local congregation increases in direct proportion to which the objectives of the decision making body are made specific.*
5. *Though the local church honors individual initiative, diversity, and responsibility, its decision making bodies in conflict situations prefer a consensus approach over other forms of problem solving and action taking.*
6. *Conflict within the local church can be more creatively handled if it is institutionalized rather than if it is suppressed, ignored, or denied. However, local churches possess few procedures, if any, to institutionalize conflict.*
7. *Skills in conflict management is a necessary ingredient for effective changes in attitudes, behavior, and institutions. Different kinds of skills will be necessary when the objectives and conditions vary in significant ways.*
8. *Since the necessary roles needed for conflict management will vary according to the specific objectives chosen for impactment, more than one person may be needed to assume specialized roles. For instance, a facilitator with competence in group process work may be teamed advantageously with an organizer with expertise in community action work.*

In the light of these provisional hypotheses my conclusion is that conflict must be an integral component in the life style of the local congregation. The fact that the church has not yet integrated the dynamics of conflict into its operating procedures should not become a deterrent to continued inquiry and experimentation. Indeed,

the search for truth amid honest communication of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings as well as within procedural management of differences may be the one way that the church can define the faith and form of the Christian life for this generation.



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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

## LOCALES OF PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

## THE "HEARTLAND" CLUSTER, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

This project is located in La Mesa and Lemon Grove, two suburban communities in the eastern sector of metropolitan San Diego. The respective populations of the two townships are approximately 35,000 and 28,000. Each is characterized by single home dwellings, with apartments sparsely scattered through each municipality. Indicative of the racial composition of the area is the following 1970 school census for elementary children in Lemon Grove: Caucasian 85.3%, Mexican-American 9.7%, Black 3.2%, Oriental 1.6%, and American-Indian .2%. As one travels from south (Lemon Grove) to north (La Mesa) the percentage of whites increases.

The political atmosphere is a decisively conservative one and is reflected in the region's public media. A solid core of right wing radicals dominate the "letters to the editor" columns in the city's newspapers. This conservatism can be attributed in part to the impact of military personnel (active and retired) and in part to a moderate climate that attracts the affluent. One exception is the Heartland Human Relations Association (HHRA) which has provided "moral" encouragement to the project.

Four churches in the Heartland area have acted as support communities for the project. These congregations, accompanied by rounded membership figures, are Fletcher Hills Presbyterian Church (950),

First United Methodist of La Mesa (2,200), United Church of Christ of La Mesa (350), and the United Church of Christ of Lemon Grove (400). Each congregation reports from one to five black families in its constituency. Assigned staff members are Calvin Jackson and William Johnson.

#### THE PASADENA "CLUSTER," PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

Pasadena has long been a city with a national image of festive celebrations, cultural stimulation, and educational excellence. This portrait has been somewhat tarnished by the problems affecting other suburban municipalities in metropolitan Los Angeles such as school desegregation, housing for the highly mobile and the poor, the deterioration of the inner city, and minority unrest. The percentage of blacks among the city's 125,000 residents is currently 20% and is rising each year. One-fourth of the black families have an annual income of less than \$3,000 and three-fifths earn less than \$6,000 per year. Unemployment among low income persons was estimated to be 12% in 1967 and has increased even more during the 1970-71 recession.

The organizing agency for the project is the Ecumenical Council of Pasadena Area Churches, a body representing the "established" denominations in the region. Six Protestant congregations that have served as sponsoring institutions along with their memberships are, the First Congregational Church of Pasadena (740), Holliston United Methodist Church (696), Neighborhood Unitarian Church (364), Pasadena Presbyterian Church (2600), St. Mark's Episcopal Church (861), and

Westminster Presbyterian Church (1794). These six congregations report this year a combined annual budget totaling \$831,484. The sociological characteristics of the six memberships can be characterized as white, middle and upper class, multiple age groupings, and politically moderate. One of the six parishes does have more than a token number of blacks. St. Mark's Episcopal Church reports that 15-20% of its membership is black, with a higher percentage of blacks represented in the church's lay leadership. Each congregation issued a public statement last October in opposition to the recall of liberal members of the Pasadena school board. The churches' support proved to be crucial in lieu of a narrow margin of voters who favored retention of the proponents of integrated schools. Tom Albright and R. Haines Moffat were placed as staff members in this locale.

#### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY EAST, NORTH HOLLYWOOD AND SUN VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

The contracting body for the eastern sector of the San Fernando Valley is the Inter-Church Cluster. This newly formed ecumenical body is composed of four Protestant Churches (First Christian Church of Sun Valley, St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Sun Valley United Methodist Church, and Valley Lutheran Church), and one Roman Catholic Church (Our Lady of the Holy Rosary). By far the largest and strongest of the five congregations is the Catholic parish. Each of the Protestant churches is characterized by a declining membership, financial instability, and a racial composition of almost entirely Caucasian. They differ in the numbers of blue collar workers in their constituencies. Each parish

is served by a young, and/or restless pastor who desires to take the church's mission to Valley residents. Consequently, various kinds of conflict have arisen during the cluster's initial year.

The North Hollywood-Sun Valley area is geographically situated in the southeast sector of the Valley's 264 square miles and represents approximately one-sixth of the inhabitable land. The area now represents the oldest section of the Valley and is a prime target for the region's first ghetto. Since freeways and railroads crisscross its terrain, various areas are zoned as industrial. During the past decade hundreds of multi-unit dwellings have been built and contribute to the high rate of mobility. It is generally estimated that the average family stays four years, owns two automobiles, and works either in the Valley or Central Los Angeles.

Total population for the area is 200,000 persons. Multiple ethnic groups comprise this number and include a majority of whites, a sizable minority of Mexican-Americans, scattered units of immigrants from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Europe, and a few blacks. To this locale in transition Loren McBain and Thomas Schmidt (half time) were assigned as staff members.

#### SAN FERNANDO VALLEY WEST, RESEDA, CALIFORNIA

The sponsoring agency for Project Understanding in the western sector of the San Fernando Valley is the Valley Interfaith Council (VIC). This non-profit religious-oriented organization composed of clergymen and laymen had its origin in the controversy surrounding

Proposition 14, a popular initiative of the mid-1960's dedicated to the repeal of the state's Fair Housing Law. VIC now serves as a vehicle for local citizens to secure information and to engage in co-operative training and action around social issues that impinge upon Valley residents.

First conceived as a "bedroom community," the Valley is now characterized by "unmanaged metropolitan sprawl." A million plus persons now live within its natural boundaries. The racial composition of its multiple communities is approximately 90% Caucasian in areas other than around the black ghetto in Pacoima. The black population outside Pacoima numbers less than 1% while the remaining 9% of the population is classified as brown.

The rate of mobility by Valley occupants is considerably higher than the national average. Many school districts report annual changes in pupil census to be greater than 50%. An increasing number of persons are becoming apartment dwellers. A more recent phenomenon affecting a large number of families is the large scale layoff of aerospace employees. Only six percent of the Valley's inhabitants are active members of a church or synagogue.

The political atmosphere in the western end of the Valley where the more affluent citizens live is predictably conservative. Political representation in civic, governmental, and educational structures reflects this assessment. A notable exception is VIC which tends to take an active, moderate-liberal stance on public issues. Staff personnel assigned to this project are Austin Watson (full time) and Thomas Schmidt (half time).



## TEMPLE CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, TEMPLE CITY, CALIFORNIA

Temple City is a suburban community of greater Los Angeles located in the San Gabriel Valley. The 1970 census lists its population as 40,338 persons. Caucasians constitute 80 percent of the city's racial composition. Most of the remaining residents are Mexican-American descendents. Blacks number only 23 persons, even though a significant ratio of blacks live in nearby Pasadena.

Since its small land area (3.78 square miles) is boxed in by surrounding townships, the growth potential for Temple City is limited. Nearly three-fourths of its employable citizens commute to work beyond the city's boundaries. Little community consciousness exists despite the city's low transient rate. Multiple lines of public authority that crisscross the city include three school districts, four political jurisdictions (state and federal), and three water districts.

The membership of the congregation numbers 339 persons. Less than one-half of these members live inside Temple City. The statistical figures for the median income and age distribution of parishioners closely parallel the same data for the city's occupants. Several of the church's laymen hold strategic positions in the community. The pastor, Ed Lindberg, has served as a member of the Temple City school board this past year. At present no members of the congregation are black. Nor is it likely that blacks will become members until the housing encircling the church's property is opened to minorities. Appointed staff members in this project location are John Forney and Vic Smith.

## APPENDIX B

## LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

*SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA 91711  
Foothill Boulevard at College Avenue / (714) 626-3521*

February 25, 1971

Dear Friend of Project Understanding:

I am writing in regard to an important dimension of Project Understanding II. Earlier this year we secured the services of a graduate student on sabbatical leave from the pastoral ministry, John Davis, as a research-observer. For the past four months he has visited each locale on two different occasions as well as been present at evaluation sessions for the entire project. Each of these experiences has enabled him to obtain specific and uniform data indispensable for our annual report.

Now he is prepared to enter into the second phase of his contract which entails interviews with the key actors, pastors, laymen, and staff members, in each of the five centers. During the month of March he will be requesting limited time from you, approximately one hour to be scheduled at your convenience. During the interview hour he will be utilizing a questionnaire instrument designed to obtain your reflections-evaluations of the various strategies undertaken by each team-committee. The information that you will share will be treated confidentially and anonymously. A general evaluation that includes data on your locale will be made available.

When Mr. Davis calls by telephone to request an appointment for the interview, I trust that you will respond affirmatively.

Respectfully yours,

Dan D. Rhoades  
Acting Director  
PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

## APPENDIX C

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Coding for Questions Addressed to Specific Respondents:

- A. Clergy, coordinators, supervisors
- B. Laity: volunteers and recruits
- C. Staff (interns)

A. Introductory Questions:

1. In what ways have you been involved in Project Understanding? (A,B)
2. How were you enlisted to become involved in Project Understanding? (A,B)
3. How are local decisions in Project Understanding made? (A,B,C)
4. To whom are you accountable for decisions made in Project Understanding? (A,B)
5. What do you consider to be the principal goals of Project Understanding? (A,B,C)

B. Contract Procedure:

1. How was the "contract" arranged for Project Understanding to be located in your community? (A,C)
2. What problems, if any, have arisen regarding expectations and performances of the contract agreements? (A,C)
3. What alternatives would you suggest to improve the contracting process? (A,C)
4. In your judgment does the placing of two interns in a local setting seem to be a realistic approach to achieving the goals of Project Understanding? If so, why? If not, why not? (A,B)

C. Training:

1. What do you feel were the major components of the training that you received from the COMMIT staff? (C)
2. How would you evaluate your training from the COMMIT staff? (C)

3. What kinds of input would have improved the training process? (C)
4. How has your training from the COMMIT staff affected the way that you are carrying out your work in Project Understanding? (C)
5. What kinds of training were you given to enable you to understand the perspective of clergymen with whom you work? (C)  
OR: what kinds of training did the staff (interns) receive to understand your perspective as pastor? (A)
6. How well were the staff (interns) trained to lead in reaching the goals of Project Understanding? (A,B)  
What skills have the staff (interns) demonstrated to help you to reach the goals of the project? (A,B)
7. What types of training would have further strengthened their leadership in Project Understanding? (A,B)

D. Supervision:

1. What role(s) did you play in supervising the work of staff (interns)? (A)
2. In what ways did the local supervision aid or hamper your work? (C)
3. Can you identify ways in which the staff interns received supervision from Project Understanding's administrators-consultants? If so, how would you appraise such supervision? (A)
4. What kinds of supervision from the administrators-consultants would have enabled the staff to have been more effective in their work? (A,C)
5. In what respects would you have altered the overall supervisory-consulting process? (A,C)

Team Building Process for Steering (Planning) Committee:

1. How would you describe the efforts of the staff (interns) to build group "ownership" in the project? (A,B)
2. How well did the staff (interns) work together in the team building stages? (A,B)
3. What kinds of specific problems did your executive group encounter in the team building stages? (A,B,C)
4. What changes would have accelerated the process of team building? (A,B,C)

F. Change-Conflict:

1. a. What kinds of changes have occurred since Project Understanding was initiated? (A,B,C)

- (1) Self:
- (2) Congregation:
- (3) Community:

- b. Were these changes planned or accidental? (A,B,C)

2. What kinds of conflict have been generated by Project Understanding? (A,B,C)

OR: How do you account for the absence or near absence of conflict in Project Understanding in this locale? (A,B,C)

3. To what extent can the conflict be attributed to the project's emphasis on racism? (A,B,C)

4. What role(s) did the staff (interns) play in the conflict situations? (A,B,C)

5. Did any new learnings arise out of the energy created by conflict? If so, what? (A,B,C)

6. Which one of these incidences of conflict do you consider to have been the most critical for the local project? (A,B,C)

7. How was the particular conflict handled by these persons? (A,B,C)

- a. Pastors:
- b. Laymen:
- c. Staff (interns):

8. In what ways has the Project been strengthened or weakened by conflict? (A,B,C)

9. a. In what ways has the church been strengthened or weakened by conflict? (A,B,C)

OR:

- b. How do you account for the absence or near absence of conflict in the congregation? (A,B,C)

10. What do you think that members of the congregation have learned about participation in conflict? (A,B,C)

G. Achievements:

1. How have you been affected by the project? (A,B,C)

2. What have been the tangible results of Project Understanding in your locale? (A,B,C)
3. Can you give any specific indications of attitudinal, behavioral, or institutional changes in respect to racism? (A,B,C)
4. How would you evaluate the degree to which the Project has achieved its original goals? (A,B,C)
5. How would you appraise the effects of the Project on the congregation in which you pastor or which you are a member? (A,B)
6. Are you convinced that the goals of Project Understanding can best be achieved through the local church? If so, why? If not, why not? (A,B,C)

H. Conclusion:

1. Who else should I interview in order to secure a true picture of Project Understanding? (A,B,C)

## APPENDIX D

## INFORMAL GLOSSARY

*Change Agent:* A person who is professionally trained to create change in *social systems* and institutions. In Project Understanding the change agent is the staff member, alias staff intern, seminary intern or seminarian. See *intern experience*.

*Collaboration:* The attempt to organize across interests; the coalition of persons from a variety of positions who desire to work on problems that transcend their cleavages.

*Cognitive:* Knowledge-oriented. A term applied to behavior which is comparatively intellectual and devoid of feeling.

*Conflict Management:* A class of training concepts and techniques which purport to enable skilled individuals to deal more effectively with interpersonal and intergroup conflict in organizational situations. Particular emphasis is placed on the acceptance and containment of conflict. In this study the term includes a delineation of the personal skills and institutional procedures for the handling of conflict.

*Confrontation:* A term referring to the process by which one person attempts to make another person(s) aware of the latter's behavior. Ordinarily such an approach is characterized by directness, persistence, and abrasiveness.

*Consultant:* A person who possesses general knowledge of retrieving information, diagnosing problems, and deriving solutions. His

services are usually requested by the consultee. He holds no responsibility for the implementation of the models or strategies formulated. He may or may not desire to pass on his skills to the client so that the latter can develop his own expertise.

*Contract:* A formal agreement made for the skills, services and resources to be rendered by one or more parties. In Project Understanding it has reference to both the formal and informal sets of shared understandings and expectations made between representatives of a church, a cluster of churches, or an ecumenical agency and the administrators of the project.

*Evaluation:* The study of the degree to which an action program achieves specific results, both intended and unintended, along with an analysis of which elements in the situation hamper or foster the *process* of change.

*Facilitator:* A person whose role is to enable a *process* of events to occur. His style is neither authoritative nor abdicative. Rather, he assists group movement by observing intergroup behavior, by diagnosing the group's needs and by providing pertinent resources.

*Feedback:* A mechanism to monitor the differences between expected and actual results.

*Goal Setting:* Almost self-explanatory, the term denotes a process that occurs at the suggestion of a group member early in the group's existence as a means to provide a sense of cohesion and direction. In Project Understanding the term "goal" was used as a statement of general purpose and direction while the term



"objective" was employed to designate specific targets of change. Ordinarily objectives lend themselves to measurability within a specific time period.

*Group Maintenance:* The various acts by members of a group that function to hold the group together, to increase members' knowledge, and to differentiate the group from the environment.

*Interaction:* Almost every relationship between two or more activities. In human relations it includes all forms of communication, verbal and non-verbal.

*Intern Experience:* An opportunity to work in a learner's role while engaged with organizational problems under conditions of responsibilities. In Project Understanding it became the occasion for equipping seminarians as *change agents* as well as providing a reality experience to test their competence.

*Model:* A very ambiguous term that seems to cover anything on the scale from physical embodiment to image projections and from replication of details to general configuration of variables. In Project Understanding it serves as a category for the designing and/or testing of objectives and strategies to counter attitudinal and institutional *racism*.

*Questionnaire:* An instrument formulated by social scientists to learn the opinions of respondents or else to test the degree of changes in their attitudes, feelings, and/or behavior that have occurred between two or more administrations. In Project Understanding the measuring instrument was developed by Professors Joseph C. Hough,

Jr. and John B. McConahay, Jr. It was submitted twice over a seven month period in congregational worship services in four of the five different locations.

*Organizational Development:* An evolving collection of philosophies, concepts, and techniques which are aimed at the improvement of systemic performances by changing the *social systems* or structures. One of its chief architects is Warren G. Bennis.

*Problem Solving:* A *process* of resolving common issues which exist between or among persons. Stress is placed upon the concrete and relevant.

*Process:* A general term for the way a system develops or moves.

*Racism:* As defined by project administrators it is any attitude or action by a person, group, institution, or a society as a whole which denigrates, discriminates against, or forcibly assimilates persons purely on the basis of their identity with particular racial or cultural groups.

*Institutional Racism:* A phenomenon that acknowledges the overt and covert powers that collectives possess to reward or penalize solely by the criterion of racial or cultural identification.

*Simulation:* The creating of a life-like *model* of a system or institution so that the key elements and their interactions are experienced. In Project Understanding they serve as a class of training techniques in which individuals are able to experience various dimensions of organizational behavior.

*Social System:* A set of persons and their relationships. More

pointedly, it refers to the pattern of social relations within a formal institution such as the church.

*Steering Committee:* The group of persons either nominated or recruited to guide the direction in which the project moved in each locale.

Its functions fluctuate from an advisory capacity to an action role.

*Task Force:* A group of people who hold a common objective and systematically work toward its achievement.

*Team Building:* The *process* by which work relations are developed among individuals within a group such as a *steering committee* or *task force*. It ordinarily utilizes a variety of methods and techniques to reach the designated goal(s).

*Trainer:* An expert who conveys a desired quantity and quality of knowledge prior to the time practitioners enter into the work setting. In Project Understanding the COMMIT staff supervised and conducted specialized kinds of learnings with the nine *interns* or *change agents*.

## APPENDIX E

## DAHRENDORF'S PARALLEL CHART

Structural-Functional Model

1. Every society is a relatively persistent, stable structure of elements.
2. Every society is a well-integrated structure of elements.
3. Every element in a society has a function, i.e. renders a contribution to its maintenance as a system.
4. Every functioning social structure is based on consensus of values among its members.

Conflict Model

1. Every society is at every point subject to processes of change; social change is ubiquitous.
2. Every society displays at every point dissensus and conflict; social conflict is ubiquitous.
3. Every element in a society renders a contribution to its disintegration and change.
4. Every society is based on the coercion of some of its members by others.

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